

# **San Benito Route 156 Improvement Project**

San Benito County, California

District 5-SBt-156-PM 3.0/R8.2

05-344900

05-0000-05050

SCH# 2002091009

## **Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report**



## **IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

Prepared by the  
State of California Department of Transportation

**August 2011**



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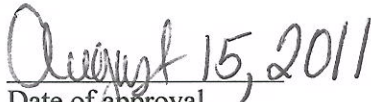



Widen State Route 156 from The Alameda in San Juan Bautista to 0.2 mile  
east of Fourth Street (Business Route 156) in San Benito County

## FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Submitted Pursuant to: State Division 13, Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Department of Transportation

  
Date of approval

  
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Chief, Central Region Environmental  
California Department of Transportation

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### Abstract

The proposed project consists of the construction, operation, and maintenance of the widening of State Route 156 from The Alameda in San Juan Bautista to 0.2 mile east of Fourth Street (Business Route 156) in San Benito County. The purpose of the project is to improve route continuity, reduce congestion, and increase safety. This Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report responds to a decision of the Superior Court of California for the County of San Benito, which precluded Caltrans from approving the project or certifying the Environmental Impact Report without first preparing an additional review document following the procedures applicable to those relating to supplemental environmental impact reports. This Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report and the portions of the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report which the judgment did not affect, have been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and State California Environmental Quality Act guidelines. This Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report reflects Caltrans' independent judgment and analysis.



Widen State Route 156 from The Alameda in San Juan Bautista to 0.2 mile  
east of Fourth Street (Business Route 156) in San Benito County

## DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Submitted Pursuant to: State Division 13, Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Department of Transportation

3/9/11  
Date of Approval

  
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### Abstract

The Proposed Project consists of the construction, operation, and maintenance of the widening of State Route 156 from The Alameda in San Juan Bautista to 0.2 mile east of Fourth Street (Business Route 156) in San Benito County. The purpose of the project is to improve route continuity, reduce congestion, and increase safety. This Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report responds to a decision of the Superior Court of California for the County of San Benito, which precluded Caltrans from approving the project or certifying the Environmental Impact Report without first preparing an additional review document following the procedures applicable to those relating to supplemental environmental impact reports, which document must update the 2004 hydrological study; explain the standards used to determine noise impacts and whether those standards are uniform statewide; circulate to the public information regarding the California tiger salamander that was added to the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report; and provide additional analysis and explanation of feasible mitigation measures for loss of farmland. In all other respects, the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report was determined adequate and complied with the California Environmental Quality Act and other applicable laws.



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## **List of Abbreviated Terms**

Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
dBA	decibel
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
PM	post mile

# Chapter 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Type of Environmental Review

The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, a supplement to the previously prepared and certified State Route 156 Improvement Project Final Environmental Impact Report (October 2008) (State Clearinghouse Number 2002091009), presents additional analysis or information in regard to hydrology, noise, California tiger salamander, and farmland impacts, as ordered by the San Benito County Superior Court, Case Number CU-08-00176, *Save San Juan Valley v. California Department of Transportation* In the Judgment and Writ of Mandate issued on February 3, 2010. In that decision, from a judgment of the Superior Court of San Benito County, the court held that the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) failed to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in certifying the Environmental Impact Report and approving the project in the following particulars:

- a. The Environmental Impact Report's analysis of hydrology and flooding impacts and the cumulative impacts thereof are inadequate insofar as the 2004 hydrologic study must be updated, taking into account the San Benito County Water District comments.
- b. The Environmental Impact Report's analysis of noise impacts is inadequate insofar as the standards used to determine noise impacts need to be specified with more particularity and the standards applied to the project shall be consistent with those applied statewide.
- c. The information regarding the California tiger salamander that was added to the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report must be circulated to the public as part of the supplemental Environmental Impact Report.
- d. The Environmental Impact Report requires additional analysis and explanation of feasible mitigation measures for loss of farmland.

The judgment further added that:

- e. Any findings, including the Statement of Overriding Considerations, relying on the above-stated deficiencies are inadequate.
- f. As to the remaining issues raised by the petition, the court denies such challenges.

The Writ of Mandate precludes Caltrans from approving the project or certifying the Environmental Impact Report without first preparing an additional environmental review document following the procedures applicable to those relating to supplemental environmental impact reports and for that document to contain “adequate information to address the deficiencies specified in the judgment.”

Accordingly, this Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report is prepared in compliance with the applicable requirements of California Environmental Quality Act Guideline 15163, which states the following:

- a. The lead or responsible agency may choose to prepare a supplement to an Environmental Impact Report rather than a subsequent Environmental Impact Report if:
  1. Any of the conditions described in Section 15162 (Subsequent Environmental Impact Reports and Negative Declarations) would require preparation of a subsequent Environmental Impact Report, and
  2. Only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previous Environmental Impact Report adequately apply to the project in the changed situation.
- b. The supplement to the Environmental Impact Report need contain only the information necessary to make the previous Environmental Impact Report adequate for the project as revised.
- c. A supplement to an Environmental Impact Report shall be given the same kind of notice and public review as is given to a draft Environmental Impact Report under Section 15087.
- d. A supplement to an Environmental Impact Report may be circulated by itself without re-circulating the previous draft or final Environmental Impact Report.
- e. When the agency decides whether to approve the project, the decision-making body shall consider the previous Environmental Impact Report as revised by the supplemental Environmental Impact Report. A finding under Section 15091 shall be made for each significant effect shown in the previous Environmental Impact Report as revised.



In preparing this Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, Caltrans referenced the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report and made use of that document and its supporting administrative record as necessary and appropriate. Because the court denied all challenges to the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report other than those set forth in the judgment, this document considers only the areas set aside pursuant to the judgment and the writ. Caltrans received comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report and responded to the comments in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report. Caltrans has reviewed the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report and has determined the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and that the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report reflects Caltrans' independent judgment and analysis.

## 1.2 Incorporation by Reference

In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act Guideline 15150, this Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report incorporates the following by reference: Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact: San Benito 156 Improvement Project, San Benito County, California (October 2008). These documents can be reviewed at:

Caltrans District Office, 50 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

San Benito County Free Library, 470 5th Street, Hollister, CA 95023, (831) 636-4107

San Juan Bautista Library, 801 2nd Street, San Juan Bautista, CA 95045, (831) 623-4687

For individuals with sensory disabilities, this document is available in Braille, in large print, on audiocassette, or on computer disk. To obtain a copy in one of these alternate formats, please call or write to Caltrans, Attn: Trais Norris, 2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100, Fresno, CA 93726; phone (559) 243-8178 Voice, or use the California Relay Service TTY number, 1-800-735-2929.

California Environmental Quality Act Guideline 15150(a) states that an Environmental Impact Report "may incorporate by reference all or portions of another document which is a matter of public record or is generally available to the public. Where all or part of another document is incorporated by reference, the incorporated language shall be considered to be set forth in full as part of the text of the Environmental Impact Report." California Environmental Quality Act goes on to state that incorporated text shall be briefly summarized, and the entire document be made available for public review

(California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines 15150(b) and (c). As explained above, the 2008 Environmental Impact Report contains detailed environmental analysis of the proposed project, in compliance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, other than as set forth in the judgment.

### **1.3 Public Review**

In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report was circulated for 45 days to local, state, and federal agencies and to interested organizations and individuals to review and comment on it. Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Guideline 15163(b), this Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contains only the information necessary to make the previous Environmental Impact Report adequate. In this instance, that information is precisely defined by the court judgment and the writ. The public can review this information at the address listed in Section 1.2.

Public notice of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report publication marked the beginning of the 45-day public review period. Caltrans received written comments during this review period at the following address:

G. William "Trais" Norris, III  
2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726  
Phone: (805) 542-4711 or  
E-mail: [trais\\_norris@dot.ca.gov](mailto:trais_norris@dot.ca.gov)

Caltrans responded in writing to all comments received on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report during the 45-day public review period. Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Guideline 15088, comments received after the close of the 45-day public review period may not receive a response.

Caltrans provides that no person be excluded from participation or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity administered by the Department (see Appendix A for the Title VI Policy Statement).

### **1.4 Supplemental Environmental Impact Report Certification**

The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report

that was circulated, together with responses to comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report and any changes or corrections made to the Draft



Supplemental Environmental Impact Report in response to comments, constitutes this Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report. Caltrans reviewed the project, the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report, and any public testimony or comments and, based on that information and all other substantial record evidence, decided to certify the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report and approve the project. As California Environmental Quality Act Guideline 15163(e) requires, Caltrans would make a finding on each potentially significant effect identified in the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report and the portions of the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report not altered by the judgment.

## **1.5 Supplemental Environmental Impact Report Organization**

The organization of this Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report mirrors the organization of the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report in regard to discussions of impacts to the regulatory setting; affected environment; impacts; and avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures. Exceptions are the noise and farmland sections.

The noise section, as directed by the judgment and writ, provides the information necessary to specify with particularity the standards that were used in the Environmental Impact Report to determine noise impacts for the project. The farmland section, as directed by the judgment and writ, provides additional analysis and explanation of feasible mitigation measures for loss of farmland.

It is anticipated that readers may consider this Supplemental Environmental Impact Report together with the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report. The chapters in this document are numbered to correspond to the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report; however, the sequence of the environmental particulars (specifics) discussed follows the court's judgment (hydrology/floodplain, noise, California tiger salamander, and farmland) and are not in the same sequence as the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report. Only the areas cited in the judgment are discussed because it was not necessary to supplement all portions of the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report.



## **Chapter 2**      **Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures**

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The judgment of the Superior Court of San Benito County upheld the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report in all respects but for the particulars cited in Section 1.1 of this document. Therefore, the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contains only the information necessary to make the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report adequate for the project. This chapter will:

- a. Provide an updated analysis of hydrology and flooding impacts, and the cumulative impacts thereof, by updating the 2004 hydrologic study, taking into account the San Benito County Water District's comments.
- b. Provide the information necessary to specify with particularity the standards used to determine noise impacts, and show that the standards used for the project are consistent with those applied statewide.
- c. Circulate to the public the information regarding the California tiger salamander that was added to the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report, and provide additional information resulting from the March 3, 2010 decision to elevate the species from a California species of special concern to a threatened species.
- d. Provide additional analysis and explanation of feasible mitigation measures for loss of farmland.

The following information is provided in the order listed above. Regulatory Settings are provided at the beginning of each section discussed in this document and were provided in the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report at the beginning of each section discussed.

### **2.1 Hydrology and Floodplain**

As directed by the court judgment and writ, this section will provide an updated analysis of hydrology and flooding impacts. Caltrans hydrology engineering staff completed a Hydrology and Floodplain Report in August 2010, which is included in this document as Appendix B. Caltrans evaluated several studies done for the San Juan Creek in preparing



the 2010 Hydrology and Floodplain Report. These reports and studies included the following:

- Draft Version of the San Juan Basin Surface Drainage Study by Advanced Hydro Engineering for San Benito County Water District (April 2007) (The version provided to Caltrans for the 2010 study.)
- San Juan Creek Hydrology/Hydraulics Report by the Caltrans Division of Structures (Revised January 2010)
- Flood Insurance Study, San Benito County, California and Incorporated Areas by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (Revised April 2009)
- Caltrans Location Hydraulic Study (February 2004)

The following discussion is a summary of the Caltrans 2010 Hydrology and Floodplain Report.

### ***Regulatory Setting***

Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) directs all federal agencies to refrain from conducting, supporting, or allowing actions in floodplains unless it is the only practicable alternative. Requirements for compliance are outlined in 23 Code of Federal Regulations Part 650 Subpart A.

To comply, the following must be analyzed:

- The practicability of alternatives to any longitudinal encroachments
- Risks of the action
- Impacts on natural and beneficial floodplain values
- Support of incompatible floodplain development
- Measures to minimize floodplain impacts and to preserve/restore any beneficial floodplain values affected by the project

The base floodplain is defined as “the area subject to flooding by the flood or tide having a one percent chance of being exceeded in any given year.” An encroachment is defined as “an action within the limits of the base floodplain.”

### ***Affected Environment***

In March 2010, Caltrans hydrology and design engineers and environmental division staff conducted a field survey of the project. The purpose of the field survey was to update

information in the project file, clarify conflicting information, and document changes in the existing environment.

Caltrans hydrology engineering staff completed a Hydrology and Floodplain Report in August 2010. This report documented the most current analyses on the floodplain at San Juan Creek in the project area and supersedes the 2004 Location Hydraulic Study. The report takes into consideration:

- Comments received from the San Benito County Water District on the 2007 Draft Environmental Document for the San Benito 156 Improvement Project
- A draft version of the San Juan Basin Surface Drainage Study conducted by Advanced Hydro Engineering for the San Benito County Water District
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Study revised April 16, 2009
- The San Juan Creek Hydrology/Hydraulics Report conducted by Caltrans Division of Structures revised January 12, 2010
- Data gathered from the March 2010 field survey

The project sits in the San Juan Valley between the Gabilan and Diablo Ranges of the Santa Cruz Mountains. This area of land, which drains across State Route 156 within the project limits, originates in the foothills and flows through the floor of the San Juan Valley on its way to the San Benito River. The community of San Juan Bautista is to the west and the city of Hollister is to the east of the project area. Land use is primarily agricultural in the low lands; grasslands are in the foothills.

U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps were evaluated to quantify the size and characteristics of the watershed. The maps show that three distinct sub-basins drain San Juan Creek within the project limits: San Juan Canyon, San Andreas Rift Zone, and the flatland north of State Route 156. These sub-basins drain across State Route 156.

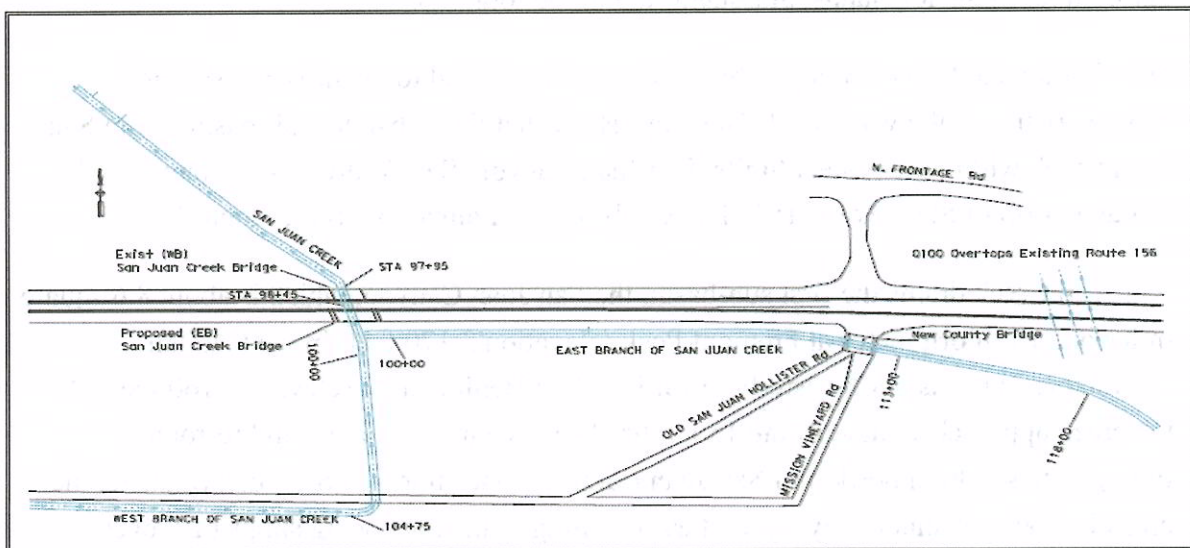
San Juan Creek drains the first sub-basin, the San Juan Canyon, which is about 8.6 square miles in area. It originates at Fremont Peak (elevation 3,170 feet) in the Gabilan Mountains and runs northwesterly toward the San Benito River (elevation 160 feet). As the creek approaches State Route 156, it has been channeled, piped, and re-routed through the southern portion of San Juan Bautista. Once north of San Juan Bautista, the creek has been channeled by agriculture, resulting in the area being subject to severe flooding.



A second sub-basin, the San Andreas Rift Zone, is about 11.8 square miles in area. It starts at the 2,500 feet elevation near the Monterey County line and runs northwesterly toward its ultimate destination, the San Benito River. As the sub-basin approaches the valley floor, farming operations have disrupted its tributaries. A row of telephone stumps running southeasterly toward Mission Vineyard Road marks the last remnant of the natural creek. When the natural creek reaches the flatland, it appears that the creek has been channelized between the foothills and State Route 156. In the mid-1950s during the construction of existing State Route 156, Caltrans realigned about 1,500 feet of the creek channel. This sub-basin is the tributary for the east branch of San Juan Creek referred to as “ditch” on the U.S. Geological Survey topographic map.

The third sub-basin, the flatland north of the State Route 156, is about 1.7 square miles in area. In this sub-basin, the natural creek beds have also been altered. According to the U.S. Geological Survey topographic map, the area between Bixby Road and Mitchell Road has a natural slope to the west and south toward State Route 156; however, west of Bixby Road, the natural topography directs flows to the west and north, away from State Route 156 (see Appendix B, Hydrology and Floodplain Report, U.S. Geological Survey Topographic and Watershed Map).

The San Benito 156 Improvement Project includes building a new bridge over San Juan Creek for the eastbound lanes and replacing an existing reinforced concrete box culvert at Mission Vineyard Road with a new bridge. Mission Vineyard Road crosses the east branch of San Juan Creek, a tributary to San Juan Creek. Figure 2-1 shows an illustration of the existing San Juan Creek and its two branches.



**Figure 2-1 San Juan Creek within the Project Limits**

Encroachments on floodplains, such as structures and fill, reduce the flood-carrying capacity, increase flood heights and velocities, and increase flood hazards in areas beyond the encroachments themselves. Minimum federal standards limit such increases to 1 foot, provided those minimum standards can be adopted directly or can be used as a basis for additional floodway studies. Under this concept, the area of the 100-year floodplain is divided into a floodway and a floodway fringe. The floodway is a channel of a stream, plus any adjacent floodplain areas, that must be kept free of encroachment so that the 100-year flood can be carried without substantial increases in flood heights. The floodway fringe is the portion of the 100-year floodplain that is not within the floodway, and in which development and other forms of encroachment may be permitted under certain circumstances.

According to Caltrans Standard Environmental Reference Guidelines, a significant encroachment is defined as a highway encroachment and any direct support of likely base floodplain development that would involve one or more of the following construction or flood-related impacts: (1) a significant potential for interruption or termination of a transportation facility, which is needed for emergency vehicles or provides for a community's only evacuation route, (2) a significant risk, or (3) a significant adverse impact on natural and beneficial floodplain values.

For the 2010 Hydrology and Floodplain Report, Caltrans evaluated the Flood Insurance Rate Maps and the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study (FIS) for San Benito County and Incorporated Areas. The evaluation was done to determine if any portion of the proposed project is in an area that could be subject to the floodplain criteria described above.

The proposed project extends over two Flood Insurance Rate Maps (Numbers 06069C0159D and 06069C0158D, both revised on April 16, 2009), and sits within different zones designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Table 2.1 provides the definitions for the Area of Special Flood Hazard zones within the project limits. All of the Areas of Special Flood Hazard zones can be viewed on page 5 of Hydrology and Floodplain Report in Appendix B.



**Table 2.1 Flood Zones within Project Limits**

Areas of Special Flood Hazard	Definition
Zone A	No Base Flood Elevations determined.
Zone AE	Base Flood Elevations determined.
Zone AH	Flood depths of 1 to 3 feet (usually areas of ponding); Base Flood Elevations determined.
Zone AO	Flood depths of 1 to 3 feet (usually sheet flow on sloping terrain); average depths determined. For areas of alluvial fan flooding, velocities also determined.
Zone X	Areas of 0.2 percent annual chance flood; areas of 1 percent annual chance flood with average depths of less than 1 foot or with drainage areas less than 1 square mile; and areas protected by levees from 1 percent annual chance flood.

Based on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Maps, Caltrans determined the west end of the project encroaches into a flood area of the San Juan Creek and the San Juan Creek tributary. The San Juan Creek tributary overtops State Route 156 just east of The Alameda in San Juan Bautista. The area east of The Alameda and south of State Route 156 is defined as Zone AH; the north side of State Route 156 is defined as Zone AE; and a segment of State Route 156, about 600 feet long, where the San Juan Creek tributary overtops State Route 156, is defined as Zone AE.

As water flows down the west branch of San Juan Creek, it creates a floodplain, which progressively widens as it reaches the flatlands. On the west branch of the San Juan Creek, the flood zone changes from Zone AO (upstream of San Juan Hollister Road) to Zone AE (south of State Route 156). In the east branch of San Juan Creek, parallel to State Route 156, the zone is A. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Map Number 06069C0159D indicates that both sides of the highway are on the floodplain, but the highway is not. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Map also indicates that the 100-year flow crosses State Route 156 under San Juan Creek Bridge without overtopping San Juan Creek Bridge or State Route 156.

The Caltrans 2010 Hydrology and Floodplain Report, as well as the other studies evaluated, indicates that the 100-year flood overtops the existing State Route 156 at the lower roadway elevations east of Mission Vineyard Road. The segment of State Route 156 just west of Mission Vineyard Road is already elevated, and all the studies conclude that this elevated segment and the San Juan Creek Bridge are not overtopped.

Caltrans hydrology engineers determined that none of the previous studies evaluated both branches (east and west) of San Juan Creek upstream of the San Juan Creek Bridge in



detail. In addition, the information in some of the reports/studies was inconsistent with each other. For example, the west branch of San Juan Creek is referenced as San Juan Creek in both the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study and the Advanced Hydro Engineering Study. The 2010 Caltrans Division of Structures Study references the east branch of San Juan Creek as San Juan Creek, and the Advanced Hydro Engineering Study references it as South San Juan Channel.

Also, the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study modeled in detail the west branch of San Juan Creek with Hydrologic Engineering Center (HEC-2) software, but used only approximation methods to estimate the 100-year flood elevations at the east branch of the creek. The Advanced Hydro Engineering study took the Federal Emergency Management Agency Hydrologic Engineering Center (HEC-2) model and converted it to a Hydrologic Engineering Center - River Analysis System (HEC-RAS) model and used Caltrans' current topography. The Advanced Hydro Engineering study slightly improved the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study model, but it did not model the east branch of San Juan Creek.

The 2010 Caltrans Division of Structures Study did not model the west branch of San Juan Creek and concentrated on only the east branch of San Juan Creek, the main branch affected by the project. Although this study is sufficient to analyze the existing San Juan Bridge and design the two new bridges proposed in this project, the 2010 study is not sufficient to analyze the impact on the floodplain because it does not take into consideration the encroachment of the new eastbound lanes, and it did not model the proposed culverts across State Route 156. The culverts are needed to bypass the flow rate that currently overtops State Route 156 to avoid increasing the flood depths after the profile of State Route 156 is raised east of Mission Vineyard Road.

The 2010 Caltrans Hydrology and Floodplain Report, a more comprehensive Hydrologic Engineering Center-River Analysis System (HEC-RAS) model, not only analyzed the existing conditions of both branches of San Juan Creek, but also addressed the impact of the two new lanes proposed at State Route 156. This study used the Federal Emergency Management Agency Hydrologic Engineering Center (HEC-2) model and the bridge openings designed by Caltrans Division of Structures, and it analyzed the channel improvements proposed at the east branch of the San Juan Creek.

All of the studies evaluated used similar flow rates, but apparently no gage (gauge) station records exist for the San Juan Creek. Gaging (gauging) station data, one of the most common types of stream flow data, is generally based on recording gage (gauge)



station observations with detailed information about the stream channel cross section. The Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study's 100-year year flow rates (Q100's) at San Juan Creek (upstream of State Route 156) are 2,600 cubic feet per second (cfs) with a watershed area of 19.1 square miles. Upstream of Mission Vineyard Road, the 100-year year flow rate (Q100's) is 800 cubic feet per second (cfs) with a watershed area of 8.12 square miles. Advanced Hydro Engineering also used the Flood Insurance Study's flow rates, while the Caltrans Division of Structures estimated flow rates similar to those in the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study.

The flow rates used in the 2010 Caltrans Hydrology and Floodplain Report are similar to the ones used in the other studies. Caltrans hydrology engineers estimated the watershed upstream of San Juan Creek to have an area of 20.4 square miles, 7 percent more than the estimated area determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study. For the west branch of San Juan Creek, Caltrans hydrology engineers used the flow rate of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study. For the east branch of San Juan Creek, Caltrans used the flow rate estimated by the Caltrans Division of Structures. A summary of flow rates is provided on page 9 of Hydrology and Floodplain Report in Appendix B.

For the 2010 Caltrans Hydrology and Floodplain Report, the San Juan Creek was modeled using three scenarios. The first scenario was the existing conditions. The second scenario widened about 1,500 feet of the east branch of San Juan Creek an additional 10 feet. The third scenario added a retaining wall and a swale parallel to the main channel of the west branch of San Juan Creek between San Juan Creek Bridge and the proposed bridge at Mission Vineyard Road.

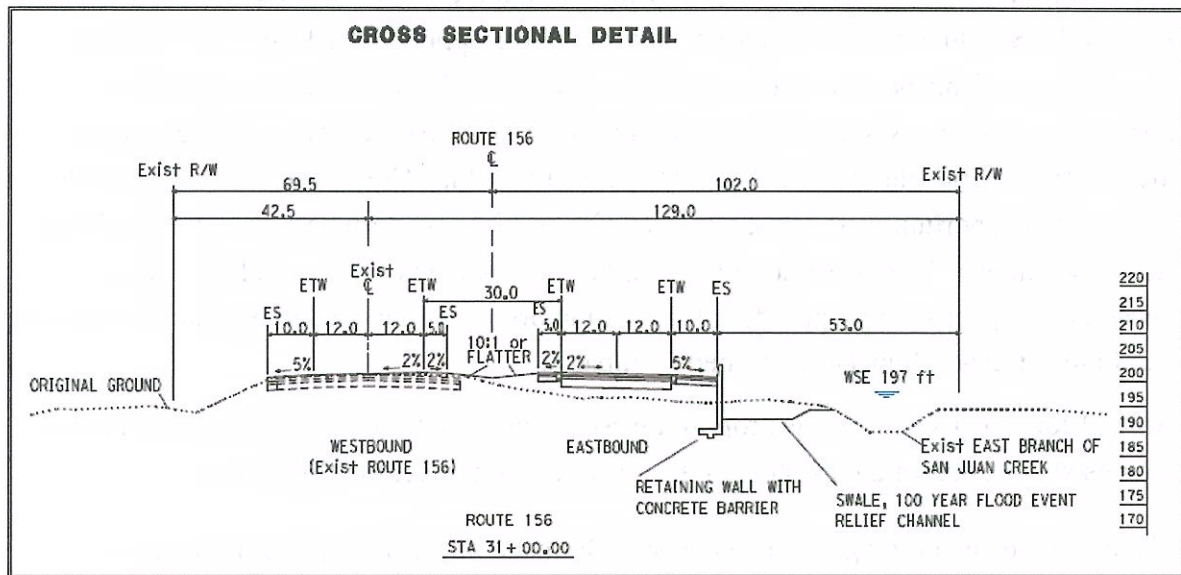
For the existing conditions (first scenario), Caltrans hydrology engineers used the same Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study Hydrologic Engineering Center (HEC-2) data for the west branch of the San Juan Creek; for the east branch of the creek, channel cross sections and structure dimensions based on survey information and as-built plans were used. Caltrans used the Manning formula, an empirical formula for open-channel flow, or free-surface flow, driven by gravity.

For the two other scenarios, data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study Hydrologic Engineering Center (HEC-2) was used for the west branch of the creek. The east branch of the creek was modeled using the existing (first scenario) and the two proposed new bridges. The second scenario assumed widening



about 1,500 feet of the east branch of San Juan Creek an additional 10 feet. The third scenario assumed adding a retaining wall and a swale parallel to the main channel of the west branch of San Juan Creek between San Juan Creek Bridge and the proposed bridge at Mission Vineyard Road.

The third scenario is shown in the cross section in Figure 2-2, based on the current Caltrans right-of-way survey information and preliminary design plans for the new eastbound lanes proposed in the State Route 156 Improvement Project.



**Figure 2-2 Retaining Wall Cross Section**

Under the first scenario, the existing conditions scenario, the water surface elevations were very similar to those of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study Hydrologic Engineering Center (HEC-2) model for the west branch of San Juan Creek. The elevation at the upper limits of the model, where the 100-year flow overtops State Route 156, was 197.38 feet. Under existing conditions, about 150 cubic feet per second (cfs) overtops State Route 156 east of the Mission Vineyard Road.

Under the second scenario, the channel-widening scenario, the water surface elevations were also very similar to those of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Insurance Study Hydrologic Engineering Center (HEC-2) model for the west branch of San Juan Creek. The elevation at the upper limits of the model, where the 100-year flow currently overtops State Route 156, was 197.31.

Under the third scenario, the swale and retaining wall scenario, the water surface elevations were similar to those of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood

Insurance Study Hydrologic Engineering Center (HEC-2) model for the west branch of San Juan Creek. The elevation at the upper limits of the model, where the 100-year flow currently overtops State Route 156, was 197.32. A summary of water surface elevations is provided on page 11 of Hydrology and Floodplain Report in Appendix B.

### ***Impacts***

The existing State Route 156 is elevated above the 100-year flow elevation from approximately 600 feet east of The Alameda to San Juan Creek. At this location, Caltrans does not propose raising the roadway profile any higher, which would allow the 100-year flow of the San Juan Creek tributary to continue overtopping State Route 156. Raising the elevation of this portion of the existing roadway would not result in a significant improvement to the existing flooding conditions in that area. Caltrans proposes raising the elevation or profile of State Route 156 east of San Juan Creek to meet similar levels of the existing portion west of the San Juan Creek. If the western portion of the roadway was raised higher than the existing level, either the eastern portion would have to be raised even higher than proposed, or the existing bridge would need to be replaced, which would result in additional environmental impacts.

An 870-foot-long soundwall is proposed west of San Juan Creek. The soundwall, due to the raised elevation of the existing highway, would not affect the floodplain.

The new roadway drainage would consist of drainage inlets and pipes draining the highway water into side ditches. Caltrans considered using two ditches to separate the onsite (highway) runoff from offsite (agricultural) runoff, but the current plans for the proposed project include a single ditch, which would convey both onsite and offsite runoff. Caltrans would treat onsite runoff with biofiltration strips, also known as vegetated buffer strips, which are vegetated sections of land over which storm water flows as overland sheet flow. The single ditch would combine the treated onsite runoff with offsite runoff. The ditch would be shallow (3 feet), and it would have berms (mounds) to slow down the flow rate and maximize infiltration.

The single ditch is not designed to solve the regional floodplain issues but would have the capacity to convey low flows, such as a 10-year storm, which would benefit properties next to State Route 156. Although there is no current plan to combine this project with a major flood management project, the proposed ditch could be enlarged and redesigned to accommodate a joint flood management project in the future. The drainage plans are included as an attachment to the 2010 Caltrans Hydrology and Floodplain Report in Appendix B.



The 2010 Caltrans Hydrology and Floodplain Report concluded that the San Benito 156 Improvement Project could affect the size of the floodplain if nothing were done. In order to avoid significant impacts, it was recommended to improve the approximately 1,500-foot segment of the east branch of San Juan Creek, construct a longer bridge over San Juan Creek, and remove the Mission Vineyard Bridge and replace it with a larger bridge. With the adoption of the avoidance measures recommended, the project would not constitute a significant floodplain encroachment as defined in 23 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 650.105(q), and it would not increase the base flood backwater elevations, and it would not have a negative impact.

### ***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

Eastern Segment of San Juan Creek - Caltrans hydrology engineers recommended two alternatives to minimize any potential encroachment on the floodplain, which would augment or enhance the 1,500-foot segment of the east branch of the San Juan Creek. Because this segment of State Route 156 is already elevated above the 100-year flow elevation, either recommendation would minimize an encroachment on the floodplain.

The first alternative was to widen the channel an additional 10 feet. Widening the channel would be covered under a Section 404 Permit for dredging or filling waters of the United States and a Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement, both anticipated for the project after the final distribution of the environmental document.

The second alternative was to construct a swale parallel to the channel with a retaining wall, which was shown in the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact as Figure 2-4, for the soundwall cross section. The proposed soundwall would be placed on top of the retaining wall.

East of Mission Vineyard Road - Since Caltrans proposes to raise the roadway profile above the floodwater level on the east side of Mission Vineyard Road, three culverts (3 feet in diameter) will be used to mimic current flooding patterns and maintain the existing water elevations.

North of State Route 156 - To minimize the flooding due to flow concentration on the north side of State Route 156, Caltrans will build a lined concrete ditch or install a reinforced concrete pipe (5 feet in diameter) parallel to State Route 156 between Mission Vineyard and the San Juan Creek. The ditch or pipe would discharge into San Juan Creek downstream of San Juan Creek Bridge (north of State Route 156).



San Juan Creek Bridge – Caltrans will construct a new bridge for the eastbound lanes south of the existing bridge over San Juan Creek, and the existing bridge will be used for the westbound lanes. The new bridge will be longer than the existing bridge because the length of the existing bridge currently restricts the flow of the water. By building the new bridge longer, the water flow elevation would be expected to remain very similar to the existing conditions.

Mission Vineyard Road - Caltrans will remove and replace the existing county box culvert on Mission Vineyard Road on the east branch of the San Juan Creek with a bridge. The replacement of the existing box culvert was included in the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact as a design feature of all the build alternatives.

## **2.2 Noise**

As directed by the court's judgment and writ, this section provides the information necessary to specify with particularity the standards that were used in the Environmental Impact Report to determine noise impacts for the project under the California Environmental Quality Act, and further demonstrates and confirms that the standards used for the project are consistent with those applied statewide.

The 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report concluded that the project will not result in any significant noise impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act. Caltrans noise policy is set forth in Caltrans' August 2006 Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol, which has been approved as California's official noise policy by the Federal Highway Administration. Caltrans applied the standard methodology from the Noise Analysis Protocol that is uniformly practiced by Caltrans statewide in screening and evaluating the noise impacts of the project.

In addition, when determining whether a noise impact is significant under the California Environmental Quality Act, a comparison is made between the no-build noise level and the build noise level. The California Environmental Quality Act noise analysis is completely independent of the National Environmental Policy Act-23 Code of Federal Regulations 772 analysis, which is centered on noise abatement criteria. Under the California Environmental Quality Act, the assessment entails looking at the setting of the noise impact and then how large or perceptible any noise increase would be in the given area. Key considerations include the uniqueness of the setting, the sensitive nature of the noise receptors, the magnitude of the noise increase, the number of residences affected, and the absolute noise level.



Caltrans identified 27 noise receptors, which represented homes and businesses in the project area. Tables 2.14 through 2.16 in Chapter 2 of the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report showed how the existing and predicted noise levels at these receptors with and without the project. The analysis was based on 2005 traffic information supplied by Caltrans District 5 Transportation Planning in July 2006. All of the build alternatives would have similar effects on the receptors. At no location on the project do project-related noise levels increase by more than 5 decibels over existing noise levels. Many of the project's sensitive receptors are north of the existing highway. At most of these receptors, the 2030 build noise levels would be lower than 2030 no-build noise levels because the realigned highway lanes would move traffic farther away from them. The existing highway would become a frontage road carrying minimal traffic.

Caltrans noise policy is contained in Caltrans' August 2006 Traffic Noise Analysis Protocol ("the protocol"), which was approved as California's official noise policy by the Federal Highway Administration on August 16, 2006. The protocol specifies the policies, procedures, and practices to be used by agencies that sponsor new construction or reconstruction of federal or federal-aid highway projects. The Noise Abatement Criteria specified in the protocol are the same as those specified in 23 Code of Federal Regulations 772. The protocol defines a noise increase as substantial when the predicted noise levels with project implementation exceed existing noise levels by 12 decibels or when a future sound level is predicted to approach a Noise Abatement Criteria level within 1 decibel of the Noise Abatement Criteria identified in 23 Code of Federal Regulations 772 (for example, 66 decibels is considered to approach the Noise Abatement Criteria of 67 decibels, but 65 decibels is not).

The Caltrans' Technical Noise Supplement (TeNS) to the protocol provides detailed technical guidance for the evaluation of highway traffic noise. This includes field measurement methods, noise modeling methods, and report preparation guidance.

It is widely accepted that the average healthy ear can barely perceive noise level changes of 3 decibels in an outdoor setting, and for most people, the threshold of hearing is closer to 10 decibels. According to Section N-2211 of the protocol, doubling sound energy results in a 3-decibel increase in sound. However, given a sound level change measured with precise instrumentation, the subjective human perception of a doubling of loudness will usually be different than what is measured. Under controlled conditions in an acoustical laboratory, the trained, healthy human ear is able to discern 1-decibel changes in sound levels, when exposed to steady, single-frequency ("pure-tone") signals in the mid-frequency (1,000 Hertz–8,000 Hertz) range. In typical noisy environments, changes



in noise of 1 to 2 decibels are generally not perceptible. However, it is widely accepted that people are able to begin to detect sound level increases of 3 decibels in typical noisy environments. Further, a 5-decibel increase is generally perceived as a distinctly noticeable increase, and a 10-decibel increase is generally perceived as a doubling of loudness. Therefore, a doubling of sound energy (for example, doubling the volume of traffic on a highway) that would result in a 3-decibel increase in sound would generally be perceived as barely detectable.

Caltrans has determined there are no significant impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act because the project would not cause an increase of more than 5 decibels at any of the receptors, which would be noticeable by the human ear but less than significant.

The Noise Analysis Protocol analyzes the potential for noise abatement in already-noisy areas according to standard criteria that are explained in the Regulatory Setting, which is included in the Final Environmental Impact Report. In other words, the Noise Analysis Protocol requires consideration for noise abatement in some cases even if there is no increase in noise above the baseline conditions. For example, noise abatement was considered in several project locations where the project would actually reduce noise levels over the baseline. The California Environmental Quality Act, though, does not require mitigation in instances where there is already a beneficial impact from the project itself. However, because the Final Environmental Impact Report is a blended National Environmental Policy Act/California Environmental Quality Act (NEPA/CEQA) document, the federal rule of considering noise abatement for preexisting conditions was also applied in the National Environmental Policy Act context.

As explained in the administrative record for the lawsuit challenging the Final Environmental Impact Report for the project, during the course of conducting its environmental noise analysis for the project, Caltrans had two traffic noise analysis protocols: the October 1998 protocol and the August 2006 protocol. The updated Noise Technical Report (May 2007) used the October 1998 protocol, which was referenced in the 2007 Draft Final Environmental Impact Report. However, Caltrans used the August 2006 protocol for the noise analysis contained in the October 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report and to prepare the responses to comments contained in the Final Environmental Impact Report. In any case, both protocols define “substantial increase” as an increase of 12 decibels over existing noise levels or when the future noise level with the project approaches or exceeds the noise abatement criteria, in this case 67 decibels. As a result, the California Environmental Quality Act noise analysis contained in Chapter



3 of the Draft Environmental Impact Report and the Final Environmental Impact Report, including the responses to comments, is accurate.

In a response to a comment that was included in the Final Environmental Impact Report, Caltrans explained, “It is true that other jurisdictions use a lower increase for their significance criteria.” This statement may have resulted in some confusion about whether Caltrans applies a uniform standard statewide. Caltrans only uses the Noise Analysis Protocol statewide and uses no other methodology to conduct noise impact analysis. The reference to “other jurisdictions” was to agencies other than Caltrans, which have the discretion to establish their own analysis protocols. Caltrans applies the process of standards of the Noise Analysis Protocol in a uniform manner statewide.

### **2.3 Threatened and Endangered Species: California Tiger Salamander**

As directed by the court judgment and writ, this section provides the information added to the discussion of the California tiger salamander in the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report. This section also provides additional information resulting from the March 3, 2010 decision by the California Fish and Game Commission to elevate the species from a California species of special concern to a threatened species.

#### ***Regulatory Setting***

The main federal law protecting threatened and endangered species is the Federal Endangered Species Act: 16 United States Code, Section 1531, et seq. See also 50 Code of Federal Regulations Part 402. This act and subsequent amendments provide for the conservation of endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems on which they depend.

Under Section 7 of this act, federal agencies, such as the Federal Highway Administration, are required to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service to ensure that they are not undertaking, funding, permitting, or authorizing actions likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. Critical habitat is defined as geographic locations critical to the existence of a threatened or endangered species.

The outcome of consultation under Section 7 is a Biological Opinion or an incidental take statement. Section 3 of the Federal Endangered Species Act defines take as “harass,



harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or any attempt at such conduct.”

California has enacted a similar law at the state level, the California Endangered Species Act, California Fish and Game Code, Section 2050, et seq. The California Endangered Species Act emphasizes early consultation to avoid potential impacts to rare, endangered, and threatened species and to develop appropriate planning to offset project-caused losses of listed species populations and their essential habitats.

The California Department of Fish and Game is the agency responsible for implementing the California Endangered Species Act. Section 2081 of the Fish and Game Code prohibits “take” of any species determined to be an endangered species or a threatened species. Take is defined in Section 86 of the Fish and Game Code as “hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill.” The California Endangered Species Act allows for take incidental to otherwise lawful development projects; for these actions, an incidental take permit is issued by the California Department of Fish and Game.

For projects requiring a Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act, the California Department of Fish and Game may also authorize impacts to the California Endangered Species Act species by issuing a Consistency Determination under Section 2080.1 of the Fish and Game Code.

### ***Affected Environment***

Caltrans biologists prepared a Natural Environment Study for the project in March 2007. The study provides information needed to comply with a variety of state and federal laws, regulations, and executive orders relating to the natural environment. Potential effects on natural resources, including federal and state special-status species and their habitats, were analyzed.

Caltrans biologists searched the California Natural Diversity Database Rarefind (San Juan Bautista, Hollister, Watsonville East, Prunedale, Salinas, Natividad, Mr. Harlan, Paicines, Tres Pinos, Three Sisters, San Felipe, and Chittenden U.S. Geological Survey Quadrangles), examined topographical maps, and did field surveys to determine the potential impacts of this project on the biological resources of the area. Caltrans biologists identified habitat for the California tiger salamander within the project area. The Biological Study Area for the project and the location area for this species were shown in the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report as Figures 2-5 and 2-7. In this document, the maps are shown at the end of this section as Figures 2-3 and 2-4. The



Biological Study Area at Union Road, in Figure 2-4, has been changed to reflect the modification of San Juan Road and a frontage road.

### *California Tiger Salamander*

On August 5, 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) as threatened throughout its range. On March 3, 2010, the California Fish and Game Commission voted to elevate the state status of the California tiger salamander from a California species of special concern to a threatened species.

Caltrans biologists surveyed around the ponds nearest the project area for California tiger salamanders on December 11, 2003, and no salamanders were seen. Surveys done at known California tiger salamander ponds the same night also produced negative results. This was a dry winter. A survey was attempted in January 2007, but ponds near the non-native grassland did not hold water long enough to support California tiger salamander breeding.

The California tiger salamander is an amphibian. It is large or stocky with a broad, rounded snout. Adult males are about 8 inches long; females grow slightly less than 7 inches long. They have white or pale yellow spots or bars on a black background on their back and sides. Their bellies vary from an almost uniform white or pale yellow to a variegated pattern of white or pale yellow and black. They have small eyes with black irises. The eyes protrude from their heads.

The species is restricted to grasslands and low (under 1,500 feet) foothill regions where lowland aquatic sites are available for breeding. They prefer natural seasonal pools or ponds that mimic such pools (stock ponds that are allowed to go dry).

California tiger salamanders are known to occur in several ponds on the San Juan Oaks Golf Course property, west of Union Road and about 900 feet south of State Route 156. No California tiger salamander aquatic habitat occurred within the project footprint.

No continuous grassland habitat connects the project footprint to the nearest California tiger salamander breeding ponds. The California tiger salamander spends about 95 percent of its lifecycle (its non-breeding period) in burrows. A small area of non-native grassland sits at the east end of the project at the southeast corner of the State Route 156 and Union Road intersection (see Figure 2-4). A low density of pocket gopher and California ground squirrel burrows, which may be used by California tiger salamanders, is found in the area of this non-native grassland. This



area is periodically mowed next to Union Road and is surrounded by agricultural fields on the west and north sides of the project footprint.

### ***Impacts***

A Biological Assessment was prepared, and Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was initiated through Caltrans, as assigned by the Federal Highway Administration, after the preferred alternative was selected. Initially, Caltrans biologists determined that there would be no temporary or permanent impacts to upland habitat occupied by the California tiger salamander. During formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, however, habitat was identified closer to the project area. Based on the late discovery of habitat, Caltrans biologists have changed the determination to “may affect, likely to adversely affect” the California tiger salamander. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Biological Opinion on September 19, 2008 concurring with that determination.

Caltrans will need to acquire a 2081(b) Incidental Take Permit from the California Department of Fish and Game before construction. An Incidental Take Permit will be submitted to the California Department of Fish and Game after completion of the final environmental document.

The initial determination was based on the conclusion that the nearest breeding ponds for California tiger salamanders were over 2 miles away from the project area. In addition, because of the low density of rodent burrows and the lack of continuous grassland habitat connecting the project footprint (the area that is affected) to the breeding ponds, there was a low likelihood of this non-native grassland being used as California tiger salamander upland habitat. However, as stated previously, during formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, habitat was identified about 0.75 mile away. Therefore, there is a potential for impacts to adult salamanders within upland habitat during construction because the project footprint is within the 1.24-mile dispersal distance from known California tiger salamander breeding ponds.

### ***Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures***

Potential impacts to the California tiger salamander that could occur in the uplands habitat adjacent to the project area at State Route 156 and Union Road would be avoided or minimized by incorporating the following avoidance and minimization measures:

- To the maximum extent practicable, project activities within potential California tiger salamander upland and dispersal habitat will be implemented between May 15 and



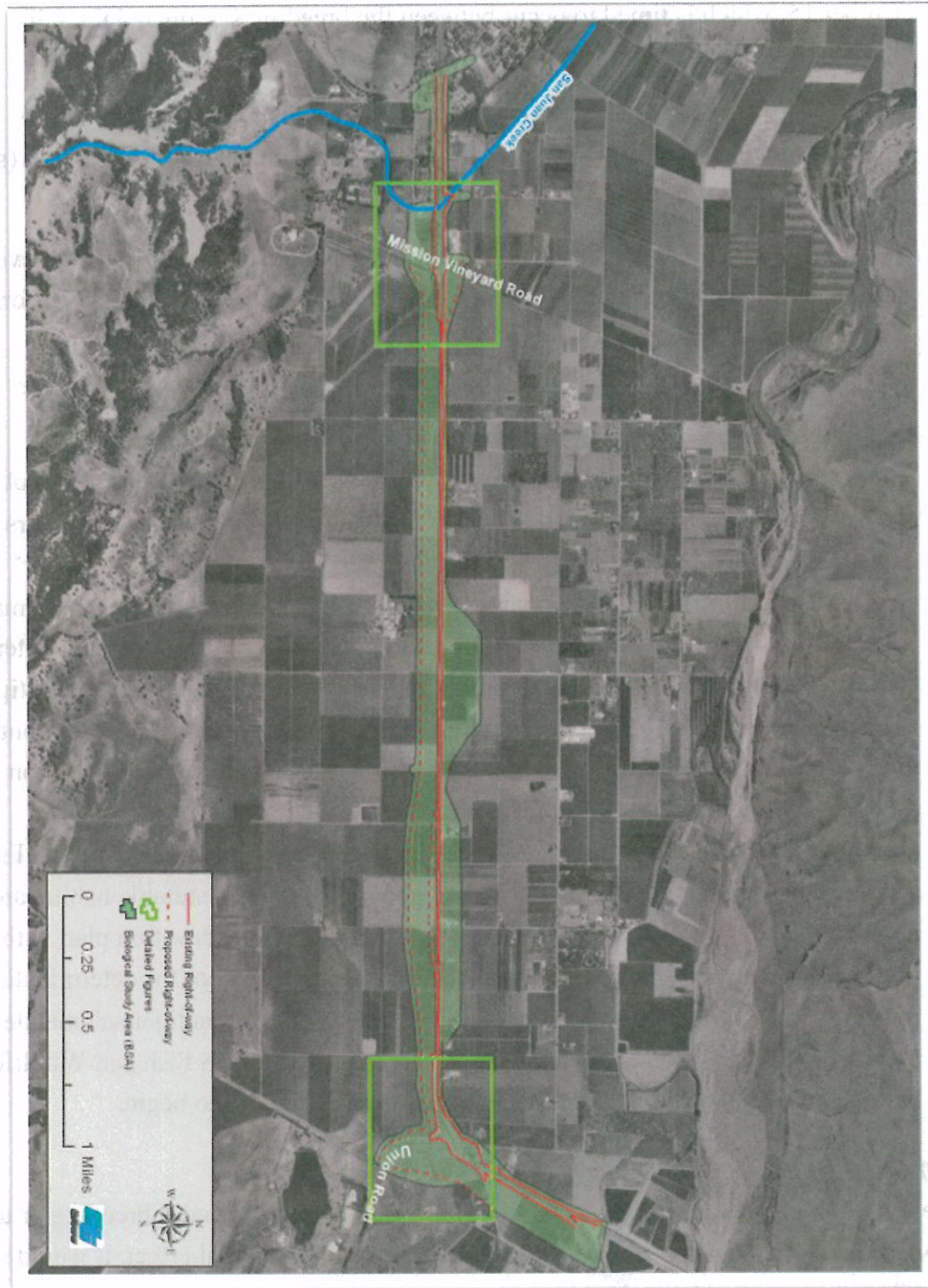
October 15, which is timed to occur between the breeding season and the fall dispersal period for the California tiger salamander.

- Exclusionary fencing will be installed to avoid impacts to adjacent non-native grasslands that potentially serve as California tiger salamander upland habitat (see Figure 2-4).
- During vegetation removal and grading activities a qualified biologist will survey for and relocate any California tiger salamanders identified within potential California tiger salamander habitat.
- A limited number of small mammal burrows within potential California tiger salamander habitat will be hand excavated prior to construction activities. Approximately 50 of the 300 rodent burrows identified in the eastern portion of the project area that are deemed most likely to contain California tiger salamanders will be hand excavated by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist to determine if California tiger salamanders are present. If a California tiger salamander is located during hand excavation activities, then all rodent burrows within potential California tiger salamander upland habitat will be excavated. If no California tiger salamanders are located during excavation of the 50 burrows most likely to contain the species, then hand excavation activities will be suspended, and construction activities may proceed. Any California tiger salamanders found during hand excavation activities will be relocated the shortest distance possible by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved biologist to a location that has suitable habitat and will not be affected by project activities. A rodent burrow hand excavation plan with protocol for hand excavation, potential relocation sites, protocol for determination of rodent burrows with highest likelihood of containing California tiger salamanders, and names of qualified personnel must be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at least 30 days before hand excavation activities are to begin.

### ***Cumulative Impacts***

There will be no permanent impacts to the California tiger salamander breeding or upland habitat; therefore, because the project will not add any incremental effect, it would not contribute to any cumulative impacts.





**Figure 2-3 Biological Study Area for the Project**

This map shows the biological study area for the project. The rectangular box near Union Road, indicates the area where the California tiger salamander was identified, and the rectangular box near Mission Vineyard Road indicates the area where the California red-legged frog was identified.



**Figure 2-4 Biological Study Area (Union Road)**

This map is a closer view of the area where the California tiger salamander was identified. The blue line indicates the placement of the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) fencing.



## 2.4 Farmlands

As directed by the court's judgment and writ, this section provides additional analysis and explanation of feasible mitigation measures for loss of farmland. Caltrans will acquire conservation easements to reduce the farmland impacts resulting from this project. However, farmland impacts cannot be avoided and even with the adoption of the following mitigation measures it is too uncertain as to whether the impacts will be mitigated to less than significant.

According to Section 15370 of the California Environmental Quality Act, "mitigation" includes:

- (a) Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or part of an action
- (b) Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and implementation
- (c) Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment
- (d) Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action
- (e) Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources

### *Avoiding the Impact*

The entire project is surrounded by farmland except for 1 mile at the beginning of the project, which is within San Juan Bautista's city limits, between The Alameda and Mission Vineyard Road. All of the farmland surrounding the remainder of project is considered Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance (California Department of Conservation, Office of Land Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program).

Caltrans' policy is to avoid or minimize farmland impact to the maximum extent possible. However, this segment of State Route 156 is surrounded by farmland, which makes the avoidance of farmland impacts impossible. Only the No-Build Alternative would completely avoid converting farmland, but it would not meet the purpose and need of the project.

### *Minimizing the Impact*

Alternative 6, the Preferred Alternative, is a four-lane controlled-access expressway. This alternative avoids all right-of-way acquisition (including farmland) and



relocations (residences) north of the existing State Route 156. The existing State Route 156 would be used as a frontage road, which eliminates the need for more right-of-way (including farmland). An intersection without signals is proposed at Bixby Road and requires additional right-of-way south of the existing State Route 156 to provide adequate distance between the frontage road intersection at Bixby Road (existing State Route 156) and the intersection of the newly aligned State Route 156/Bixby Road.

Caltrans has incorporated measures to minimize farmland impacts by reducing the median and modifying the preliminary design of the project resulting in the conversion of fewer acres of farmland. Based on the Caltrans Right of Way Appraisal maps, the farmland acreage to be converted has been reduced from a preliminary estimate of 145 acres to 124 acres.

As part of the right-of-way process for purchasing land, Caltrans would negotiate parcel exchanges with neighboring farmers to reconfigure split farmland parcels for resale so that the parcels would continue to be farmed and not contribute further to the segmentation and conversion of farmland. Generally, when Caltrans resells or reconfigures land in an area zoned for agriculture as buffers or conservation easements, deed restrictions limiting future use to agriculture would be included to keep land in agricultural use in perpetuity. Remnant parcels of farmland are avoided as much as possible by acquiring right-of-way in “slivers” or linear strips of property adjacent to the existing parcels. When possible, Caltrans will allow farmland to be kept in production (after purchase) until it is needed for construction.

#### *Rectifying/Repairing/Rehabilitating/Restoring*

Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization that would be displaced, or that has onsite investments, such as wells and irrigation systems, displaced as a result of acquisition of real property for public use. Relocation resources would be available to all displaced individuals, free of discrimination. In addition, any right-of-way acquisition would be purchased at fair market value.

Currently, some farmers affected by the project have irrigation water piped under the existing State Route 156 because their source of water is located on the north side of the highway and their crops are on the south side. These farmers must cross the highway to regulate the irrigation water. During construction, when these irrigation pipes are replaced, release valves can be placed on the south side of the new



expressway, which would make crossing the highway to regulate the irrigation water unnecessary, thereby providing a safer condition.

If an excess parcel of farmland results from construction, adequate access to water for the irrigation of crops would be established and a permanent easement would be attached to ensure agricultural land use of the parcel in perpetuity.

Restoring 18 inches of topsoil to temporarily disturbed farmland would mitigate temporary impacts. At the direction of Caltrans, the construction contractor would stockpile up to 18 inches of topsoil for eventual replacement on parcels that have been disturbed.

During construction, provisions for adequate access (temporary driveways/easements) would ensure that agricultural operations are not impaired along the project limits.

*Reducing or Eliminating the Impact over Time by Preservation and Maintenance Operations During the Life of the Action*

During the circulation of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment in October 2007, a letter from the California Department of Conservation was submitted to Caltrans with suggestions and recommendations for farmland impact mitigation. The California Department of Conservation recommended several measures to mitigate farmland including conservation easements, Farmland Security Zone contracts, Williamson Act contracts, and mitigation banks, and made available to Caltrans approximately 30 “conservation tools,” which are methods used to conserve or mitigate project impacts on agricultural land. Caltrans reviewed the conservation methods and determined that all the methods are outside the jurisdiction of Caltrans and would require some form of legislation, regulation, statute, or ordinance by the State, City or County except three: Williamson Act contracts, endowments, and conservation easements.

For the Williamson Act contracts, the California Environmental Quality Act requires the review of projects that would convert Williamson Act contract land to non-agricultural use. The proposed project, a four-lane expressway, would affect 17 property parcels and convert 124 acres of prime farmland. Most of the right-of-way needed for construction of the project, about 110 acres, would come from five parcels. All of these property parcels are under Williamson Act contracts and total about 1,132 acres. None of the Williamson Act contracts would be cancelled due to the project’s right-of-way needs.



For endowments, Caltrans currently is allowed to transfer only title (ownership), but cannot transfer endowment or the donation of mitigation fees to a local, regional, or statewide organization or agency whose purpose includes the acquisition and stewardship of agricultural conservation easements. The transfer of direct endowment is considered a gift of public funds (actual dollars) and is prohibited by Article 16, Section 6 of the California Constitution. In other words, Caltrans cannot donate fees; therefore, this recommendation is not legally feasible.

*Compensating for the Impact by Replacing or Providing Substitute Resources*

For the outright purchase of easements, the California Department of Conservation recommends the use of conservation easements of land of at least equal quality and size as partial compensation for the direct loss of agricultural land. This agency states that this form of mitigation will protect a portion of those remaining land resources and lessen project impacts in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act Guideline 15370.

According to the California Department of Conservation website, an agricultural conservation easement is a voluntary legally recorded deed restriction that is placed on a specific property used for agricultural production. The goal of an agricultural conservation easement is to maintain agricultural land in active production by removing the development pressures from the land. Such an easement prohibits practices that would damage or interfere with the agricultural use of the land. Because the easement is a restriction on the deed of the property, the easement remains in effect even when the land changes ownership. Agricultural conservation easements are held by the property owner, land trusts or local governments, which are responsible for ensuring that the terms of the easement is upheld.

Caltrans has determined that a conservation easement or deed restriction is a feasible form of mitigation for the farmland impacts resulting from the project. Deed restrictions would limit future use of the land to agriculture in perpetuity and the property owner is responsible for ensuring that the terms of the easement are upheld because the property owner retains ownership.

In addition to the mitigation discussed and already adopted for this project, Caltrans will preserve farmland of roughly equal quality by purchasing a conservation easement(s) to partially compensate for the acreage of farmland converted by the project. When Caltrans programmed this project for right-of-way capital costs, the highest cost estimate was used for Alternative 2, a four-lane divided expressway with



two-lane frontage roads north and south of the expressway. When Alternative 6 was modified and chosen as the preferred alternative, less right-of-way was needed and the right-of-way capital costs were less than earlier estimated. Therefore, the savings of approximately \$500,000 can be used toward farmland mitigation. Additional funds for farmland mitigation are currently unavailable. If there are any additional savings from other mitigation costs programmed for the project, the savings may be used toward farmland mitigation.

A conservation easement(s) would be established before construction of the project begins in the year 2014. Caltrans Right of Way agents are currently corresponding with property owners within the San Juan Valley with the intention of establishing a conservation easement near the project. However, if conservation easements cannot be established near the project, Caltrans will pursue a conservation easement elsewhere.

The conservation easement will limit future use of the land to agriculture in perpetuity, and the property owner retains ownership but will be responsible for ensuring that the terms of the conservation easement are upheld. The parcel(s) proposed for conservation will continue to be used for, and is large enough to sustain, commercial agricultural production. The land will also be in an area that possesses the necessary market, infrastructure, and agricultural support services, and the surrounding parcel sizes and land uses will support long-term commercial agricultural production.

However, before purchasing the conservation easement, the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report must be approved, and Caltrans is required to conduct environmental studies and an appraisal on the parcel(s) proposed for the easement. Once compensation has been accepted, the terms of the agricultural conservation easement would be a deed restriction on the land being acquired.

Caltrans intends to establish a conservation easement near the project but if negotiations are not successful locally, Caltrans will establish a conservation easement elsewhere in California. Caltrans made inquiries to several farmland trusts, non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations with the mission of conserving farmland in California. The farmland trusts were in Northern, Central, and Coastal California. Several of these organizations stated they were willing to work with Caltrans in acquiring conservation easements of farmland subject to development pressure. These trusts stated that, depending on the location, similar properties available for sale range

between \$3,000 and \$25,000 per acre. At a 1-acre to 1-acre ratio, the \$500,000 reserved for farmland mitigation should be adequate to acquire properties of similar quality for a conservation easement based on the low sale range provided by the farmland trusts contacted.

The loss of farmland resulting from the project represents an unavoidable permanent reduction in California's agricultural land resources. However, the use of a conservation easement, along with the mitigation measures already built into the project design, would partially compensate the direct loss of agricultural land and will protect a portion of California's remaining land resources in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act Guideline 15370.



The first part of the paper is devoted to the study of the asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . It is shown that the solutions of the system (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . The second part of the paper is devoted to the study of the asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as  $t \rightarrow 0$ . It is shown that the solutions of the system (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow 0$ .



## **Chapter 3**      Chapters Intentionally Omitted

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Chapter 3 through Chapter 6 were intentionally omitted because it was not necessary to supplement Chapter 3 through Chapter 6 of the 2008 Environmental Impact Report.



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# Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—BUSINESS, TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING AGENCY

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
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Be energy efficient!*

July 20, 2010

## TITLE VI POLICY STATEMENT

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For information or guidance on how to file a complaint based on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age, please visit the following web page:  
[http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/bep/title\\_vi/t6\\_violated.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/bep/title_vi/t6_violated.htm).

Additionally, if you need this information in an alternate format, such as in Braille or in a language other than English, please contact Charles Wahnnon, Manager, Title VI and Americans with Disabilities Act Program, California Department of Transportation, 1823 14<sup>th</sup> Street, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 95811. Phone: (916) 324-1353 or toll free 1-866-810-6346 (voice), TTY 711, fax (916) 324-1869, or via email: [charles\\_wahnnon@dot.ca.gov](mailto:charles_wahnnon@dot.ca.gov).

  
CINDY MCKIM  
Director

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## Appendix B Caltrans Hydrology and Floodplain Report

State of California  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

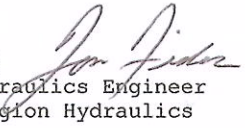
Business, Transportation and Housing Agency

### Memorandum

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To: KAL DAHIR  
Senior Design Engineer  
Project Development, Design II

Date: August 9, 2010  
  
File: 05-SBt 156  
PM 3.0/R 8.2  
EA: 05-344900

From: TOM FISHER   
Senior Hydraulics Engineer  
Central Region Hydraulics

Subject: Hydrology and Floodplain Report

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The San Benito 156 Improvement Project proposes improvements to State Route 156 between the cities of San Juan Bautista and Hollister in San Benito County. The 5.2 mile project begins within the eastern city limits of San Juan Bautista at the Alameda Avenue and ends west of Hollister, approximately 0.2 miles east of Fourth St (Business Route 156) in San Benito County. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to widen State Route 156 in San Benito County from two lanes to four lanes. The project proposes to construct a new bridge over San Juan Creek for the eastbound lanes and remove an existing reinforced concrete box culvert and replace it with a bridge at Mission Vineyard Road, which currently crosses the east branch of San Juan Creek, a tributary to San Juan Creek.

This Report supersedes the Location Hydraulic Study dated February 25, 2004 and documents the most current analyses on the floodplain at San Juan Creek in the project area. This report also takes into consideration the comments received from the San Benito Water District, a draft version of the San Juan Basin Surface Drainage Study by Advanced Hydro Engineering for the San Benito County Water District; the FEMA Flood Insurance Study revised April 16, 2009 and the San Juan Creek Hydrology/Hydraulics Report by Caltrans, Division of Structures.

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## II. SITE CHARACTERISTICS

### II A. Climate

The climate of northern San Benito County is characterized by warm summers and cool, moist winters. The normal temperature for summer and winter is 73°F and 46°F, respectively. However, it is not unusual for temperatures to rise above 100°F a few days every summer or to fall below 40°F occasionally in the winter. The average yearly rainfall is 13 inches for Hollister and 17 inches for San Juan Bautista. Most of this precipitation occurs in the period from October to May.

### II B. Topography and Hydrology Characteristics

The area of land, which drains across this stretch of Highway 156, originates in the foothills and flows through the floor of the San Juan Valley while on its way to the San Benito River. The community of San Juan Bautista is to the west, and the city of Hollister is to the east of the area of interest. Land use is primarily agricultural in the low lands, and grasslands in the foothills.

The USGS topographic maps were evaluated to quantify the size and characteristics of the watershed. The maps indicate that three distinct sub-basins drain across this stretch of highway into San Juan Creek. San Juan Creek drains the San Juan Canyon sub-basin, and is 8.6 square miles. It originates at about Fremont Peak (elevation 3,170') in the Gabilan Mountains, and runs in a northwesterly direction towards the San Benito River (elevation 160'). As it approaches the state highway and the city of San Juan Bautista as well, the creek has been channeled, piped, and re-routed through the town area. Once north of San Juan Bautista, the creek has again been channeled by agriculture. This area has been subject to severe flooding.

A second sub-basin is the San Andreas Rift Zone, which is about 11.8 square miles in area. It starts at the 2,500' elevation near the Monterey County line and also runs in a northwesterly direction towards its ultimate destination, the San Benito River. As it approaches the valley floor, farming operations has obliterated its tributaries. A row of telephone

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stumps running in a southeasterly direction towards Mission Vineyard Road marks the last remnant of the natural creek. When the natural creek reached the flatland, farmers channelized the creek between the foothills and Route 156. Also in the mid-1950's, during the construction of existing Route 156, Caltrans realigned approximately 1500 feet of the Creek Channel. This sub-basin is the tributary for the east branch of San Juan Creek referred as ditch in the USGS topographic map.

A third sub-basin of concern is the flatland north of the highway and is about 1.7 square miles. Here again, farming operations has altered the natural creek beds. According to the USGS topographic map, the area between Bixby Rd and Mitchell Rd has a natural slope to the west and south toward the highway, but west of Bixby Rd, the natural topography directs flows to the to the west and north, away from the highway. Please see the attached Topographic and Watershed Map.

### III. FLOODPLAINS

#### III A. General

Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 650, Subpart A prescribes policies and procedures for the location and Hydraulic design of Highway encroachments on floodplains. Such polices comply with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA has adapted the 100-year flood as the base flood for floodplain management purposes. The 100-year flood or **base flood** is defined as the "flood or tide having a one percent chance of being exceeded in any given year" (Q100).

Similarly, the **base floodplain** is defined as "the area subject to flooding by the base flood". An **encroachment** is defined as "an action within the limits of the base floodplain". Encroachment on flood plains, such as structures and fill, reduces the flood carrying capacity, increases flood heights, and velocities, and increases flood hazards in areas beyond the encroachment itself. Under this concept, the area of the 100-year floodplain is divided into a floodway and a floodway fringe. The floodway is a channel of a stream, plus any adjacent flood plain areas, that must be kept free of encroachment so that the 100-year flood can be carried without substantial increases in flood heights. Minimum Federal

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standards limits such increases to 1.0 foot provided those minimum standards that can be adopted directly or that can be used as a basis for additional floodway studies.

A **significant encroachment** is defined as a highway encroachment and any direct support of likely base floodplain development that would involve one or more of the following construction or flood-related impacts. (1) A significant potential for interruption or termination of a transportation facility, which is needed for emergency vehicles or provides for a community's only evacuation route. (2) A significant risk or (3) a significant adverse impact on natural and beneficial floodplain values.

### III B. Floodplain Encroachment

#### III B1. FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps

The FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) as well as the FEMA Flood Insurance Study (FIS) for San Benito County and Incorporated Areas were evaluated to determine if any portion of the proposed project is in an area that could be subject to the above described flood plain criteria. The west end of the project encroaches into a flood area of the San Juan Creek and the San Juan Creek Tributary. Please see the attached Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM).

The FIS and FIRM maps were prepared and revised by FEMA on April 16, 2009. The Hydraulics HEC-2 model in which the FIRM maps are based were prepared by SCHAAF & Wheeler Consulting Civil Engineers for San Benito County Flood Insurance Study on January 1989. The proposed project is located on the following FIRM Maps.

#### San Benito County, California and Incorporated Areas

Map Number	Revised Date
06069C0159D	April 16, 2009
06069C0158D	April 16, 2009

The proposed project is within different zones designated as Zone A, AO, AE, AH and X. The zones are defined below.

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#### SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS SUBJECT TO INUNDATION BY THE 1% ANNUAL CHANCE FLOOD

The 1% annual flood (100-year flood), also known as the base flood, is the flood that has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The Special Flood Hazard Area is the area subject to flooding by the 1% annual chance flood. Areas of Special Flood Hazard include Zones A, AE, AH, AO, AR, A99, V, and VE. The Base Flood Elevation is the water-surface elevation of the 1% annual chance flood.

ZONE A	No Base Flood Elevations determined.
ZONE AE	Base Flood Elevations determined.
ZONE AH	Flood depths of 1 to 3 feet (usually areas of ponding); Base Flood Elevations determined.
ZONE AO	Flood depths of 1 to 3 feet (usually sheet flow on sloping terrain); average depths determined. For areas of alluvial fan flooding, velocities also determined.
ZONE AR	Special Flood Hazard Area formerly protected from the 1% annual chance flood by a flood control system that was subsequently decertified. Zone AR indicates that the former flood control system is being restored to provide protection from the 1% annual chance or greater flood.
ZONE A99	Area to be protected from 1% annual chance flood by a Federal flood protection system under construction; no Base Flood Elevations determined.
ZONE V	Coastal flood zone with velocity hazard (wave action); no Base Flood Elevations determined.
ZONE VE	Coastal flood zone with velocity hazard (wave action); Base Flood Elevations determined.



#### FLOODWAY AREAS IN ZONE AE

The floodway is the channel of a stream plus any adjacent floodplain areas that must be kept free of encroachment so that the 1% annual chance flood can be carried without substantial increases in flood heights.



#### OTHER FLOOD AREAS

ZONE X	Areas of 0.2% annual chance flood; areas of 1% annual chance flood with average depths of less than 1 foot or with drainage areas less than 1 square mile; and areas protected by levees from 1% annual chance flood.
--------	---



#### OTHER AREAS

ZONE X	Areas determined to be outside the 0.2% annual chance floodplain.
ZONE D	Areas in which flood hazards are undetermined, but possible.

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### III B2. Vertical Datum

All elevations are referenced to a specific vertical datum. The vertical datum provides a starting point against which flood, ground, and structure elevations can be referenced and compared. The elevations shown in this FEMA FIS report and the FIRM maps are referenced to the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD88). All other elevations, including this analysis, shown on the report are referenced to the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (NGVD29).

Ground, structure, and flood elevations may be compared and/or referenced to NAVD88 by applying a standard conversion factor. The conversion from NGVD29 to NAVD88 ranged between 2.74 and 2.87 for this county. The conversion factor for this San Juan Creek is 2.82.

The Base Flood Elevations shown on the FIRM represent whole-foot rounded values. For example, a Base Flood Elevation of 102.4 will appear as 102 on the FIRM and 102.6 will appear as 103. Therefore, users that wish to convert the elevations in this report to NAVD88 should apply the stated conversion factor to elevations shown on the flood profiles and supporting data tables in the FIS. For example a 196.63 ft NGVD29 elevation is equal to 199.45 ft in the NAVD88 vertical datum.

### III B3. San Juan Creek Tributary

The San Juan Creek Tributary overtops Route 156 just east of Alameda Street. According to FEMA FIRM Map 06069C0158D the area east of Alameda Street and south of Route 156 is defined as Zone AH and the north side of Route 156 is defined as Zone AE. Approximately 600 ft segment of Route 156, where the San Juan Creek tributary overtops Route 156, is defined as Zone AE.

### III B4. San Juan Creek

As water flows down the west branch of San Juan Creek, it creates a floodplain, which progressively widens as it reaches the flatlands. On the west branch of the San Juan Creek, the flood zone changes from Zone AO upstream of San Juan Hollister Road to Zone AE just south of Route 156. In the east branch of San Juan Creek, parallel to Route 156, the Zone is A. The FEMA

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FIRM map 06069C0159D, suggests that both sides of the highway are on the floodplain, but the highway itself is not in it. The FEMA FIRM map suggests that the 100-year flow crosses Route 156 under San Juan Creek Bridge without overtopping San Juan Creek Bridge or Route 156.

However, our Central Region Study as well as other studies such as San Juan Basin Surface Drainage Study by Advanced Hydro Engineering for San Benito County Water District and the San Juan Creek Hydrology/Hydraulics Report by Caltrans Division of Structures revised January 12, 2010 indicates that the 100-year food overtops the existing Route 156 at the lower roadway elevations located east of Mission Vineyard Road.

All studies conclude that the San Juan Creek Bridge as well as the segment of Route 156 just west of Mission Vineyard Road is not overtopped. The segment of Route 156 just west of Mission Vineyard Road is already elevated.

#### IV. SAN JUAN CREEK HYDROLOGY AND HYDRAULICS

##### IV A. Background

Several other studies have been done for the San Juan Creek. However, none of them addresses both branches of San Juan Creek in detail. San Juan Creek has two main branches (east and west) downstream of San Juan Creek Bridge at Route 156. The west branch of San Juan Creek is referenced as San Juan Creek in both the FEMA FIS and the Advanced Hydro Engineering Study. The Caltrans Division of Structures Study references the east branch of San Juan Creek as San Juan Creek, and the Advanced Hydro Engineering Study references it as South San Juan Channel.

The FEMA FIS study modeled in detail the west branch of San Juan Creek with HEC-2 software, but only used approximation methods to estimate the 100-year flood elevations at the east branch of the Creek.

The Advanced Hydro Engineering study took the FEMA HEC-2 model converted it to a HEC-RAS model and used Caltrans current topography. This study slightly improved the FEMA FIS model, but it didn't model the east branch of San Juan Creek.

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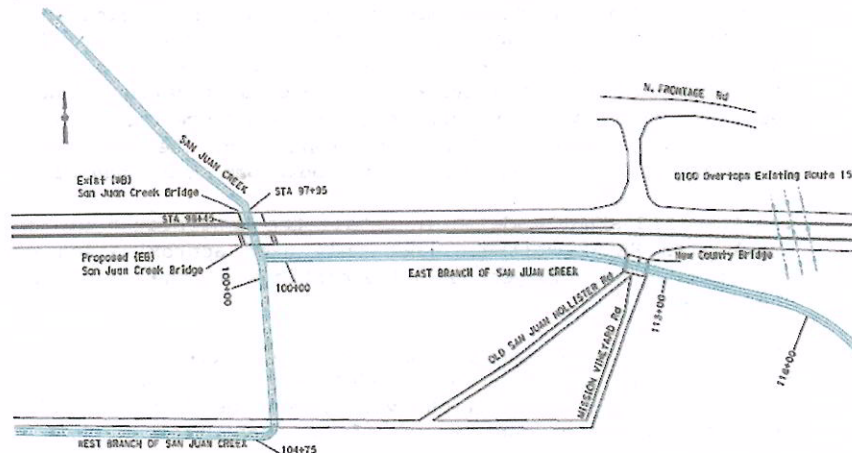


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The Caltrans Division of Structures Study didn't model the west branch of San Juan Creek; instead it only concentrated in the east branch of San Juan Creek, the main branch affected by the project. Although this study is sufficient to analyze the existing San Juan Bridge and design the two new bridges proposed in this project, the study is not sufficient to analyze the impact on the flood plain. The study doesn't take into consideration the encroachment of the new eastbound lanes. Neither, it models the proposed culverts across Route 156. The culverts are needed to bypass the flow rate that currently overtops Route 156 to avoid increasing the flood depths after the Route 156 profile is raised east of Mission Vineyard Road.

Our Central Region Hydraulics Study is a more comprehensive HEC-RAS model that not only analyzes the existing conditions of both branches of San Juan Creek, but also addresses the impact of the two new lanes proposed at Route 156. This study uses the FEMA HEC-2 model and the bridge openings designed by Caltrans Division of Structures and, it analyzes the channel improvements proposed at the east branch of San Juan Creek.

A sketch of the San Juan Creek showing the two branches of the creek is show for additional clarification.



#### IV B. Flow Rates

All Studies reviewed used similar flow rates, and apparently there are no gage station records for the San Juan Creek. The

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FEMA FIS one-hundred year flow rates (Q100's) are 2600 cfs and 800 cfs at San Juan Creek upstream of Route 156 and at upstream of Mission Vineyard Road respectively and the watersheds are 19.1 and 8.12 square miles respectively. In their study, Advanced Hydro Engineering also used the FIS flow rates. The Caltrans Division of Structures also estimated flow rates similar to the FEMA FIS.

The flow rates used in our Central Region Hydraulics Study are similar to the ones used in the other studies. At the watershed upstream of San Juan Creek, we estimated 20.4 square miles, a small percent difference than the 19.1 square miles estimated by the FEMA FIS. So, the differences in the flow rates are expected to be very similar too. For the west branch of San Juan Creek, we used the FEMA FIS flow rate, and for the east branch of San Juan Creek, we used the Division of Structures estimate. The estimated flow rates used in our study are tabulated below.

FLOW RATES

Station	Description	Exist Q100 (cfs)	Proposed Q100 (cfs)
East Branch of San Juan Creek 118+00	Upper Limit of Detail Study upstream of New County Bridge	1800	1800
East Branch of San Juan Creek 113+00 to STA 118+00	Overtops or Bypasses Route 156	150	192
East Branch of San Juan Creek 113+00	Upstream of New County Bridge	1650	1608
West Branch of San Juan Creek 104+71	Upstream of Mission-Vineyard Road	800	800
San Juan Creek 98+45	Upstream of Exist San Juan Creek Bridge	2450	2408
San Juan Creek 97+95	Downstream of San Juan Creek Bridge	2600	2600

Notes:

1. Under existing conditions, it is assumed that the flow that overtops Route 156 returns to the Creek downstream of San Juan Creek Bridge.
2. Under proposed conditions, up to 192 cfs would be bypassed to the other side of Route 156 with 3 pipe culverts.

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#### IV C. San Juan Creek Data

The creek was modeled using three scenarios. For the existing conditions, we used the same FEMA FIS HEC-2 data for the West Branch of the Creek and for the East Branch of the creek we used channel cross-sections and structure dimensions based on survey information and as-built plans.

For the two other scenarios the FEMA-HEC2 data was also used for the west branch of the Creek, but the east branch of the Creek was modeled using the existing and the two proposed new bridges. The cross sections were based in the current survey information and plans that include the new eastbound lanes proposed in Route 156. One of the scenarios modeled assumes widening approximately 1500 ft the east branch of San Juan Creek and the other assumes a retaining wall and a swale parallel to the main channel of the west branch of San Juan Creek between San Juan Creek Bridge and the proposed County Bridge. The Manning's roughness coefficient for the main channel is assumed to be 0.025 and 0.04 for the over banks.

#### IV D. San Juan Creek Water Surface Elevations

Under the existing conditions scenario, the water surface elevations match very closely the FEMA FIS HEC-2 model for the west branch of San Juan Creek, and the elevation at the upper limits of the model where the 100 year flow overtops Route 156 is 197.38 ft. Under existing conditions approximately 150 cfs overtops Route 156 East of the Mission Vineyard Road.

Under the proposed condition scenarios, the water surface elevations also matches very closely the FEMA HEC-2 model for the west branch of San Juan Creek, and the elevation at the upper limits of the model where the 100 year flow currently overtops Route 156 are slightly decreased to 197.31 ft for the channel widening alternative and 197.32 ft for the swale and retaining wall alternative. The summary of flows is tabulated below.

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Water Surface Elevation  
 (NGVD 29 Vertical Datum)

Station	Description	Q100 (cfs)	Existing	Proposed Alternative	
			Conditions	Channel Widening	Swale and Ret. Wall
East Branch of San Juan Creek STA 118+00	Upstream of New County Bridge (upper limit of detail study)	1800	197.38	197.31	197.32
East Branch of San Juan Creek STA 113+00	Upstream of New County Bridge	1608	197.34	197.25	197.25
West Branch of San Juan Creek STA 104+71	Upstream of Mission-Vineyard Road	800	199.61	199.6	199.6
West Branch of San Juan Creek STA 101+26	Upstream of Junction	800	196.42	196.16	196.16
San Juan Creek STA 99+00	Upstream of New E/B San Juan Creek Bridge	2408		196.63	196.63
San Juan Creek STA 98+45	Upstream of Exist San Juan Creek Bridge	2408	196.34	195.95	195.95
San Juan Creek STA 97+95 (97+77 Proposed Alternatives)	Downstream of Exist San Juan Creek Bridge	2600	194.59	194.08	194.08

Notes:

1. Under existing conditions, it is assumed that the flow that overtops Route 156 returns to the Creek downstream of San Juan Creek Bridge
2. Under proposed conditions, up to 192 cfs would be bypassed to the other side of Route 156 with 3 pipe culverts.

**V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

According to the Hydraulics HEC-RAS modeling of the San Juan Creek, this project would affect the size of the floodplain if nothing were done to the approximately 1500 ft of existing east branch of San Juan Creek adjacent to Route 156 between the existing San Juan Creek bridge and the proposed county bridge.

Therefore, Central Region Hydraulics recommends improving approximately 1500 ft of the east branch of San Juan Creek channel adjacent to the highway just east of San Juan Creek Bridge. There are two alternatives to improve the channel of the east branch of San Juan Creek. One of the alternatives consists in widening the channel 10 additional feet. The other alternative consists in constructing a swale parallel to the channel and constructing a retaining wall to minimize the

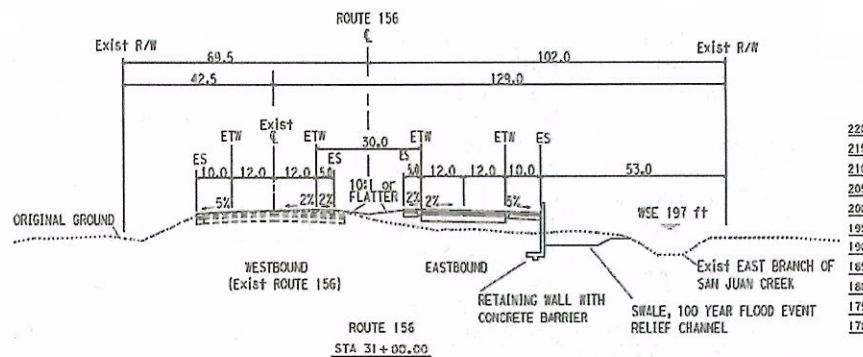
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encroachment on the floodplain. In this location Route 156 is already elevated above the floodplain water elevation. Please see the cross sectional detail.

**CROSS SECTIONAL DETAIL**



Since Caltrans proposes to raise the roadway profile above the floodwater level on the east side of Mission Vineyard Road, three 3-ft diameter culverts are recommended to mimic current flooding patterns and to safely pass all water with the potential to back up against the proposed new alignment.

To mitigate the flooding due to flow concentration on the north side of Route 156, it is proposed to construct either a lined concrete ditch or install a 5 ft diameter reinforced concrete pipe parallel to Route 156 between Mission Vineyard and San Juan Creek. This ditch or pipe would discharge into San Juan Creek downstream of San Juan Creek Bridge.

Furthermore, Central Region Hydraulics concurs with the Caltrans Structures Division to design a larger bridge for the proposed new eastbound lanes at San Juan Creek. Similarly, Central Region Hydraulics concurs with Caltrans Division of Structures to remove the existing County box culvert located on the Mission Vineyard Road on the east branch of the creek and replace it with a bridge.

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Caltrans doesn't propose raising the roadway profile between Alameda Road and San Juan Creek, so the 100 year flow of the San Juan Creek Tributary will continue overtopping Route 156 east of Alameda Avenue. In this location sound walls and concrete barriers should not be constructed. An approximately 870 ft long sound wall is proposed west of San Juan Creek, but this wall should not affect the floodplain because at this location Route 156 is already elevated above the floodplain elevation.

The roadway drainage will consist in drainage inlets and pipes draining the highway water into side ditches. Caltrans considered using two ditches to separate the onsite (highway) runoff from offsite (agricultural) runoff, but the current plans for the proposed project includes a single ditch, which will convey both onsite and offsite runoff. Caltrans will treat onsite runoff with biofiltration strips. Biofiltration strips, also known as vegetated buffer strips, are vegetated sections of land over which storm water flows as overland sheet flow. The single ditch will combine the treated onsite runoff with offsite runoff. The ditch will be shallow (3 feet) and will have berms (mounds) to slowdown the flow rate and maximize infiltration.

The ditch will not have the capacity to convey the 100-year flow rate, but State Route 156 will be elevated above the 100-year flow elevation, and the ditch will have the capacity to convey low flows, such as the 10-year storm, which would benefit properties adjacent to State Route 156. Although, there is no current plan to combine this project with a major flood management project, the proposed ditch could be enlarged and redesigned to accommodate a joint flood management project in the future. Please see the attached preliminary drainage plans.

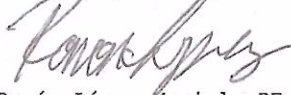
Considering the proposed channel improvements and the replacement of the culvert with a bridge and the construction of the longer bridge in the eastbound lane, the project would not increase the base flood backwater elevations. The project doesn't constitute a significant floodplain encroachment as defined in 23 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 650.1059q0.

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Study Prepared by:



Ramón López Maciel, PE  
Central Region Hydraulics Branch B  
District 6, Fresno, CA.

**VI Attachments**

1. Project Location Map
2. Topographic and Watershed Map
3. Flood Insurance Rate Maps
4. Technical Information for Location Hydraulic Study and Floodplain Evaluation Report Summary
5. Preliminary Drainage Plans

**VII REFERENCES**

1. Federal Emergency Management Agency, Flood Insurance Study, San Benito County, California and Incorporated Areas, Revised April 16, 2009.
2. Federal Management Emergency Agency, Flood Insurance Rate Maps 06069C0159D and 06069C0158D , San Benito County, California and Incorporated Areas, Revised April 16, 2009
3. California Department of Transportation, Location Hydraulic Study, February 25, 2004
4. California Department of Transportation, Division of Structures San Juan Creek Hydrology /Hydraulics Report, Revised January 12, 2010
5. California Department of Transportation, Highway Design Manual, Sixth Edition, September 1, 2006
6. Advanced Hydro Engineering for the San Benito County Water District, Draft version of the San Juan Basin Surface Drainage, April 27, 2007
7. United States Geological Survey, Topographic Maps, Hollister, and San Juan Bautista Quadrangles

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### Technical information for Location Hydraulic Study (Location 1 of 2)

Dist. 05 Co. San Benito Route: 156 PM 3.0/R8.2

EA 05-344900 Bridge: E/B San Juan Creek No. 43-0029R

#### FLOOD PLAIN DESCRIPTION:

On the west branch of the San Juan Creek, the flood zone changes from Zone AO upstream of San Juan Hollister Road to Zone AE just south of Route 156. In the east branch of San Juan Creek, parallel to Route 156, the Zone is A. The 100-year flow crosses Route 156 under San Juan Creek Bridge without overtopping San Juan Creek Bridge. However, the 100-year flood overtops the existing Route 156 at the lower roadway elevations located east of Mission Vineyard Road.

1. Description of Proposal (including any physical barriers i.e. concrete barriers, soundwalls, etc. And design elements to minimize floodplain impacts): Caltrans proposes to widen State Route 156 from two lanes to four lanes. The roadway profile will be raised above the floodwater level on the west side of Mission Vineyard Road. A new bridge will be constructed over San Juan Creek for the eastbound lanes. The bridge will be longer than the existing westbound lanes bridge.
2. ADT: 26493 Current 26493 Projected (2034) 37204
3. Hydraulic Data: (NGVD 29 Vertical Datum)
 

Base flood	$Q_{100} =$ <u>2408</u> cfs	WSE <sub>100</sub> = <u>196.63</u>
The flood of record if greater than $Q_{100}$	$Q =$ _____ cfs	WSE = _____
Overtopping flood	$Q =$ _____ cfs	WSE = _____
Are NFIP maps studies available?	Yes <u>x</u>	No _____
		Yes _____ No <u>x</u>
4. Is the highway location alternative within regulatory floodway? \_\_\_\_\_ x
5. Attach map with flood limits outlined showing all building or other improvements within the base floodplain.  
Potential  $Q_{100}$  backwater damages:
 

A. Residences?	_____ <u>x</u>
B. Other Bldgs?	_____ <u>x</u>
C. Crops?	_____ <u>x</u>
D. Natural and Beneficial floodplain values?	_____ <u>x</u>
6. Type of Traffic:
 

A. Emergency supply or evacuation route?	<u>x</u> _____
B. Emergency vehicle access?	<u>x</u> _____
C. Practicable detour available?	<u>x</u> _____
D. School bus or mail route?	<u>x</u> _____
7. Estimated duration of traffic interruption for 100-year event 12 hours
8. Estimated value of  $Q_{100}$  flood damage (if any) –moderate risk level.
 

A. Roadway	\$ _____
B. Property	\$ _____
Total	\$ _____
9. Assessment of Level of Risk  
 Low x Moderate \_\_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_\_

Attachment to the Hydrology and Floodplain Report



### Technical information for Location Hydraulic Study (Location 2 of 2)

Dist. 05 Co. San Benito Route: 156 PM 3.0/R8.2

EA 05-344901

Bridge: Mission Vineyard Road No. 43C0068

#### FLOOD PLAIN DESCRIPTION:

In the east branch of San Juan Creek, parallel to Route 156, the Zone is A. The 100-year food overtops both the existing culvert and the existing Route 156 at the lower roadway elevations located east of Mission Vineyard Road.

1. Description of Proposal (including any physical barriers i.e. concrete barriers, soundwalls, etc. And design elements to minimize floodplain impacts): An existing reinforced concrete box culver will be replaced with a bridge at Mission Vineyard Road, which currently crosses the east branch of San Juan Creek. Although the bridge will have more capacity than the existing culvert, the bridge and Mission Vineyard Road will continue to be overtopped by the 100-year flood.

2. ADT: 450 Current 450 Projected (2034) 650

3. Hydraulic Data: (NGVD 29 Vertical Datum)  
 Base flood  $Q_{100} = 1608$  cfs  $WSE_{100} = 197.25$  ft  
 The flood of record if greater than  $Q_{100}$   $Q =$  cfs  $WSE =$   
 Overtopping flood  $Q =$  cfs  $WSE =$   
 Are NFIP maps studies available? Yes x No

4. Is the highway location alternative within regulatory floodway? Yes No  
\_\_\_\_\_ x

5. Attach map with flood limits outlined showing all building or other improvements within the base floodplain.  
 Potential  $Q_{100}$  backwater damages: Additional damages are not expected.

E. Residencies? \_\_\_\_\_ x  
 F. Other Bldgs? \_\_\_\_\_ x  
 G. Crops? \_\_\_\_\_ x  
 H. Natural and Beneficial floodplain values? \_\_\_\_\_ x

6. Type of Traffic:  
 E. Emergency supply or evacuation route? x \_\_\_\_\_  
 F. Emergency vehicle access? x \_\_\_\_\_  
 G. Practicable detour available? x \_\_\_\_\_  
 H. School bus or mail route? x \_\_\_\_\_

7. Estimated duration of traffic interruption for 100-year event 12 hours

8. Estimated value of  $Q_{100}$  flood damage (if any) – moderate risk level.

C. Roadway \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 D. Property \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

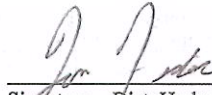
Attachment to the Hydrology and Floodplain Report

9. Assessment of Level of Risk

Low ☒ Moderate ☐ High ☐

For High Risk projects, during design phase, additional Design Study Risk Analysis may be necessary to determine design alternative.

PREPARED BY:

  
Signature – Dist. Hydraulic Engineer  
(Items numbers 3,4,5,7,9)

8/11/10  
Date

Is there any longitudinal encroachment, significant encroachment, or any support of incomparable Floodplain development? No ☒ Yes ☐

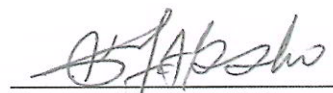
If yes, provide evaluation and discussion of practicability of alternative in accordance with 23 CFR 650.113

According to the HEC-RAS model, the project would affect the size of the floodplain if nothing were done to the approximately 1500 ft of existing east branch of San Juan Creek adjacent to Route 156 between the existing San Juan Creek bridge and the proposed county bridge.

Therefore, in addition to constructing a larger bridge for the Eastbound lanes of Route 156 and replacing the existing box culvert at mission Vineyard Road with a bridge, approximately 1500 ft of the east branch of San Juan Creek channel adjacent to the highway just north of San Juan Creek Bridge will be improved. There are two alternatives to improve the channel. One of the alternatives consists in widening the channel 10 additional feet. The other alternative consists in constructing a swale parallel to the channel and constructing a retaining wall to minimize the encroachment on the floodplain.

Since a longer bridge will be constructed for the eastbound lanes, a culvert will be replaced with a bridge and the channel will be improved, it is expected that the longitudinal encroachment will be insignificant.

Information developed to comply with Federal requirement for the Location Hydraulic Study shall be retained in the project files.

  
Signature – Dist. Project Engineer  
(Item numbers 1,2, 6, 8)

08/11/10  
Date

Attachment to the Hydrology and Floodplain Report



## FLOOD PLAIN EVALUATIONS REPORT SUMMARY

Dist. 05

Co. San Benito

Route: 156 PM 3.0/R8.2

EA 05-344900

## Limits:

The project proposes improvements to State Route 156 between the cities of San Juan Bautista and Hollister in San Benito County. The 5.2 miles project begins within the eastern city limits of San Juan Bautista at the Alameda Avenue and ends west of Hollister, approximately 0.2 miles east of Fourth St (Business Route 156) in San Benito County

## FLOOD PLAIN DESCRIPTION:

Location 1: As water flows down the West Branch of San Juan Creek it creates a flood plain, which progressively widens as it reaches the flatlands. On the west branch of the San Juan Creek, the flood zone changes from Zone AO upstream of San Juan Hollister Road to Zone AE just south of Route 156. In the east branch of San Juan Creek, parallel to Route 156, the Zone is A. The 100-year flow crosses Route 156 under San Juan Creek Bridge without overtopping San Juan Creek Bridge. However, the 100-year food overtops the existing Route 156 at the lower roadway elevations located east of Mission Vineyard Road.

Location 2: In the east branch of San Juan Creek, parallel to Route 156, the Zone is A. The 100-year food overtops both the Existing culvert and the existing Route 156 at the lower roadway elevations located east of Mission Vineyard Road.

YES NO

1. Is the proposed action a longitudinal encroachment of a floodplain? X       
However, a longer bridge will be constructed for the eastbound lanes, a culvert will be replaced with a bridge and the channel will be improved. It is expected that the longitudinal encroachment will be insignificant.
2. Are the risks associated with the implementation of the proposed action significant?      X
3. Will the proposed action support probable incompatible floodplain development?      X
4. Are there any significant impacts on the natural and beneficial floodplain values?      X
5. Routine construction procedures are required to minimize impacts on the floodplain. Are there any special mitigation measures necessary to minimize impacts or restore and preserve natural and beneficial floodplain value? If yes, explain.      X
6. Does the proposed action constitute a significant floodplain encroachment as defined in 23 CFR, Section 650.105 (q)?      X
7. Are Location Hydraulic Studies that document the above answers on file? If not explain. X

## PREPARED BY:

[Signature]  
Signature - Dist. Hydraulic Engineer

[Signature]  
Signature - Dist. Environmental Branch Chief

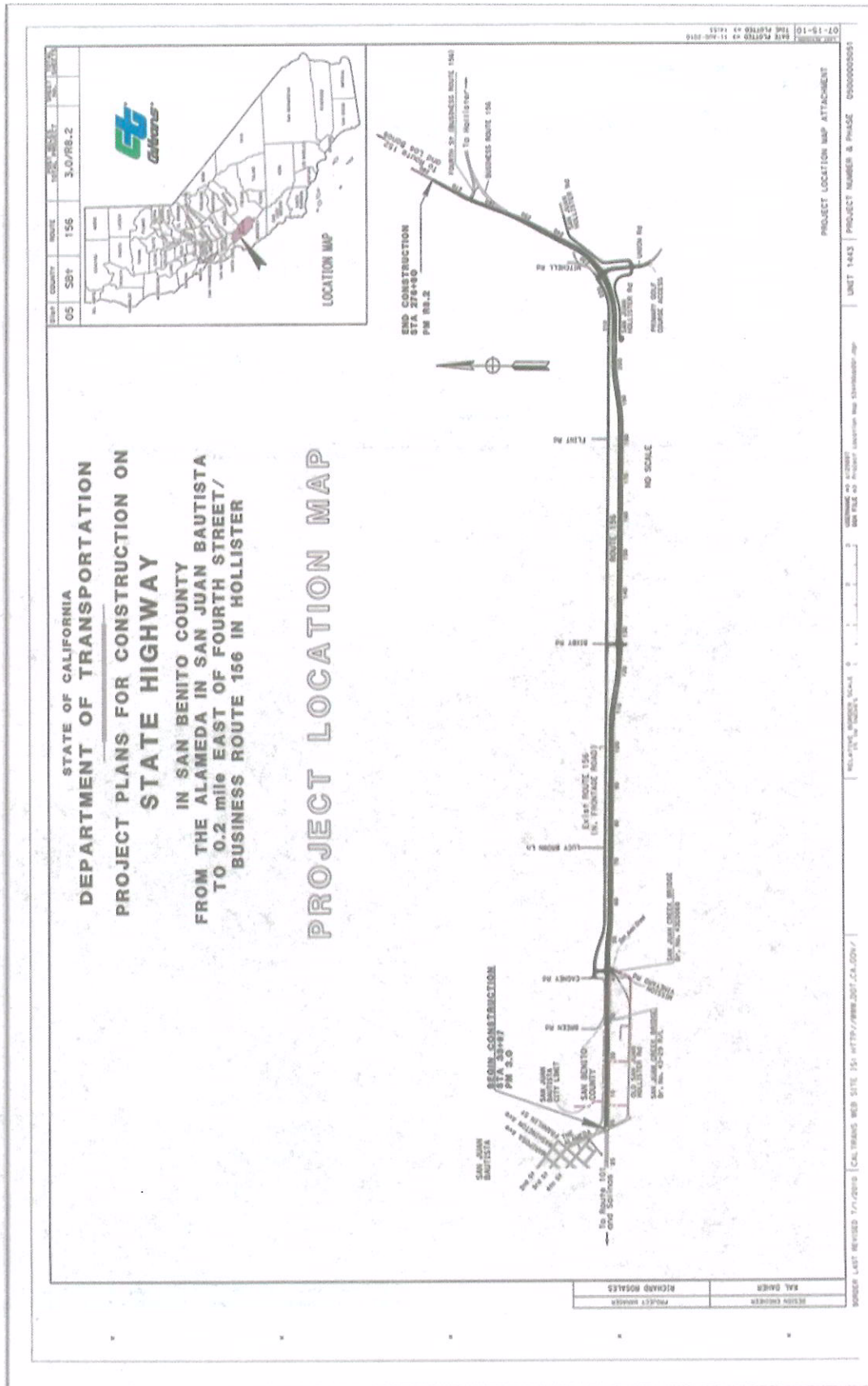
[Signature]  
Signature - Dist. Project Engineer

8/11/10  
Date

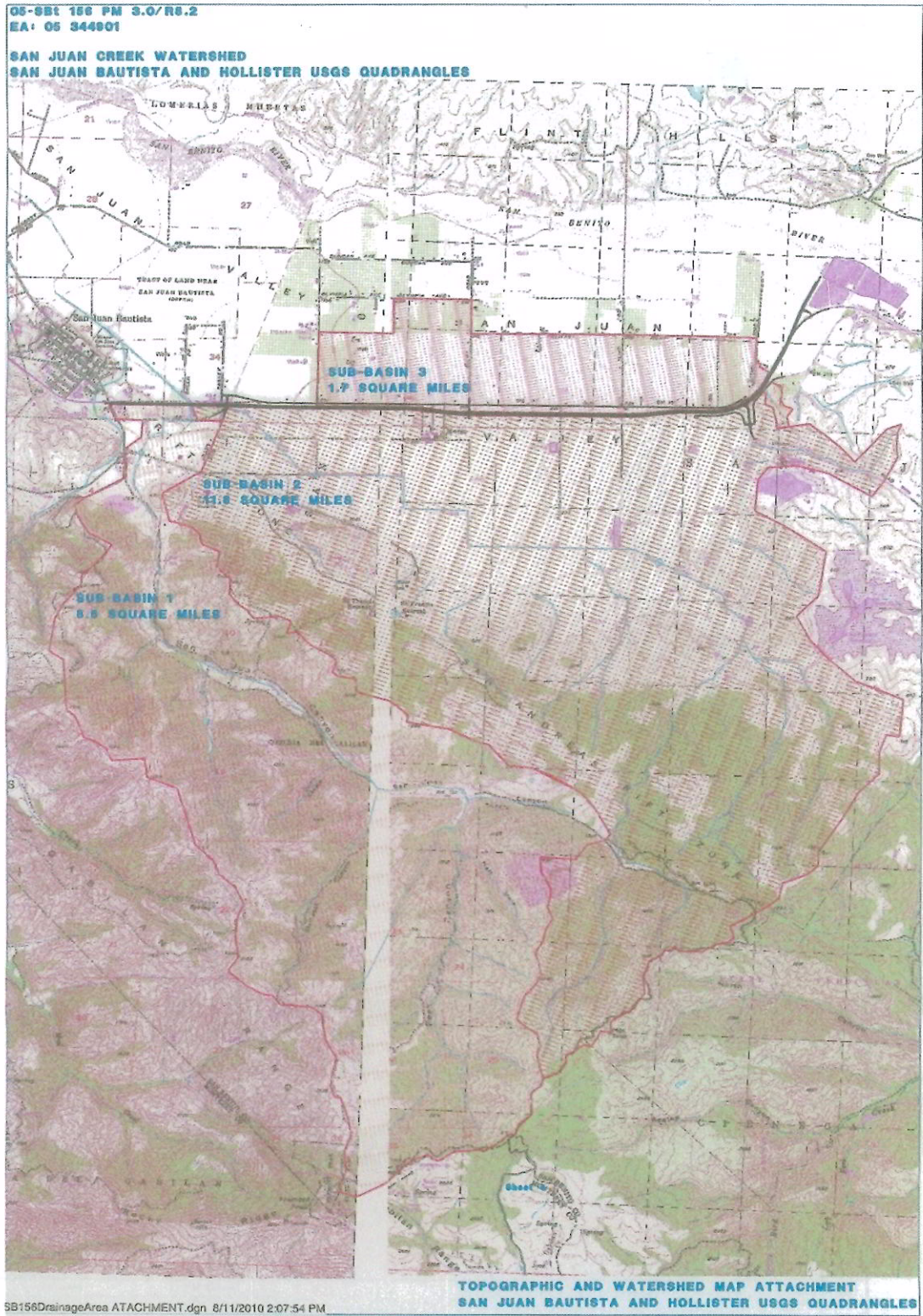
8/12/10  
Date

08/11/10  
Date

Attachment to the Hydrology and Floodplain Report





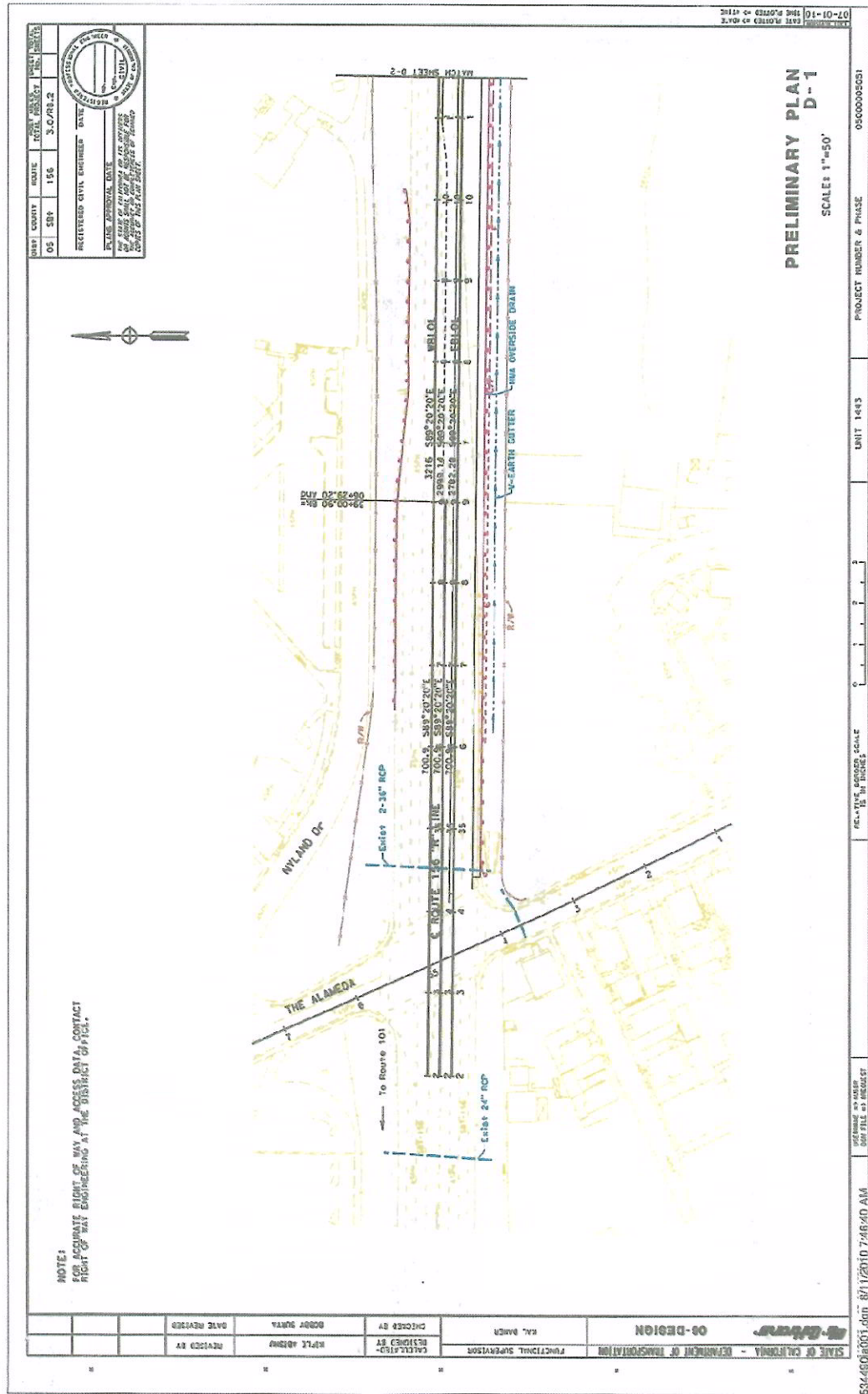




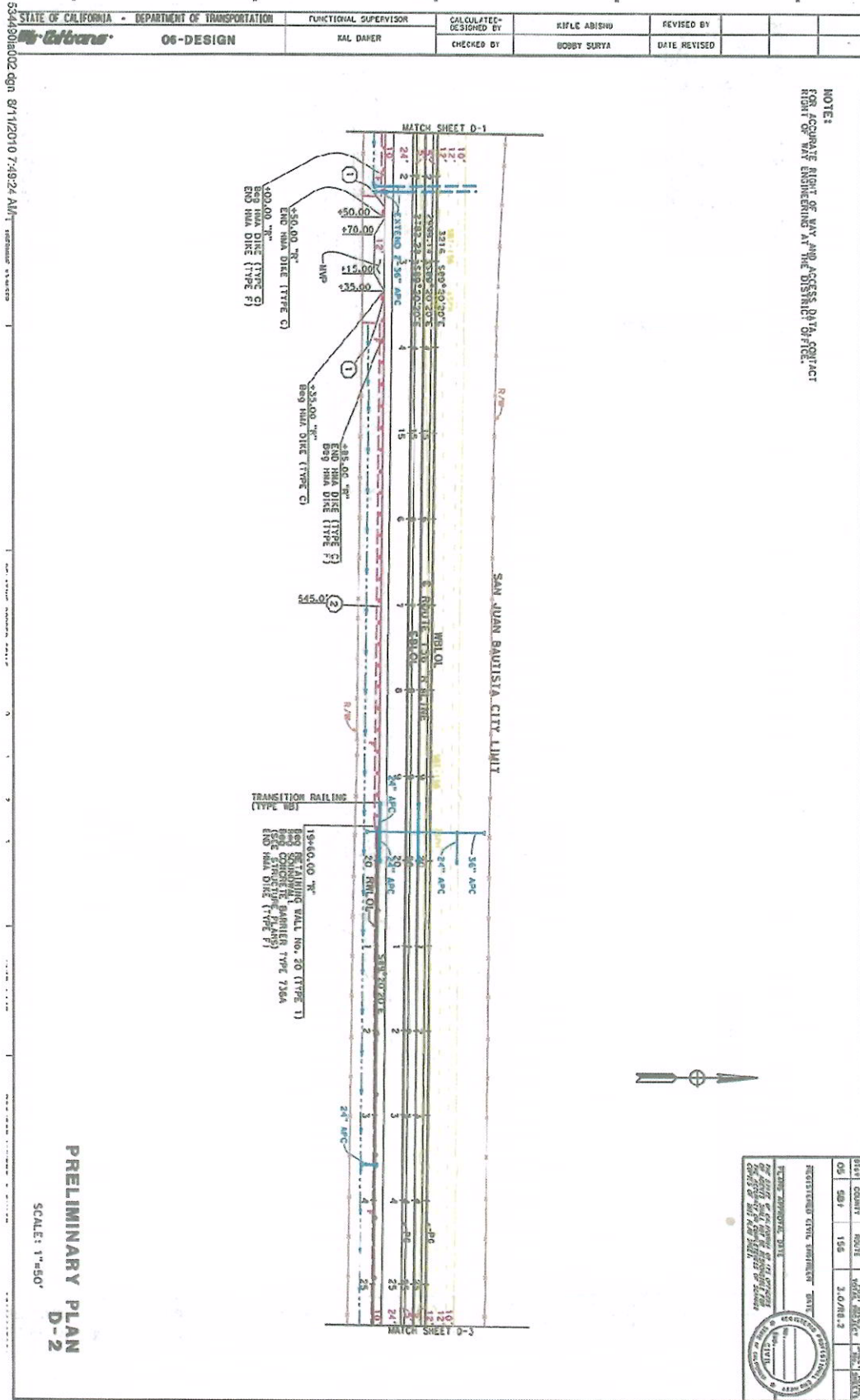


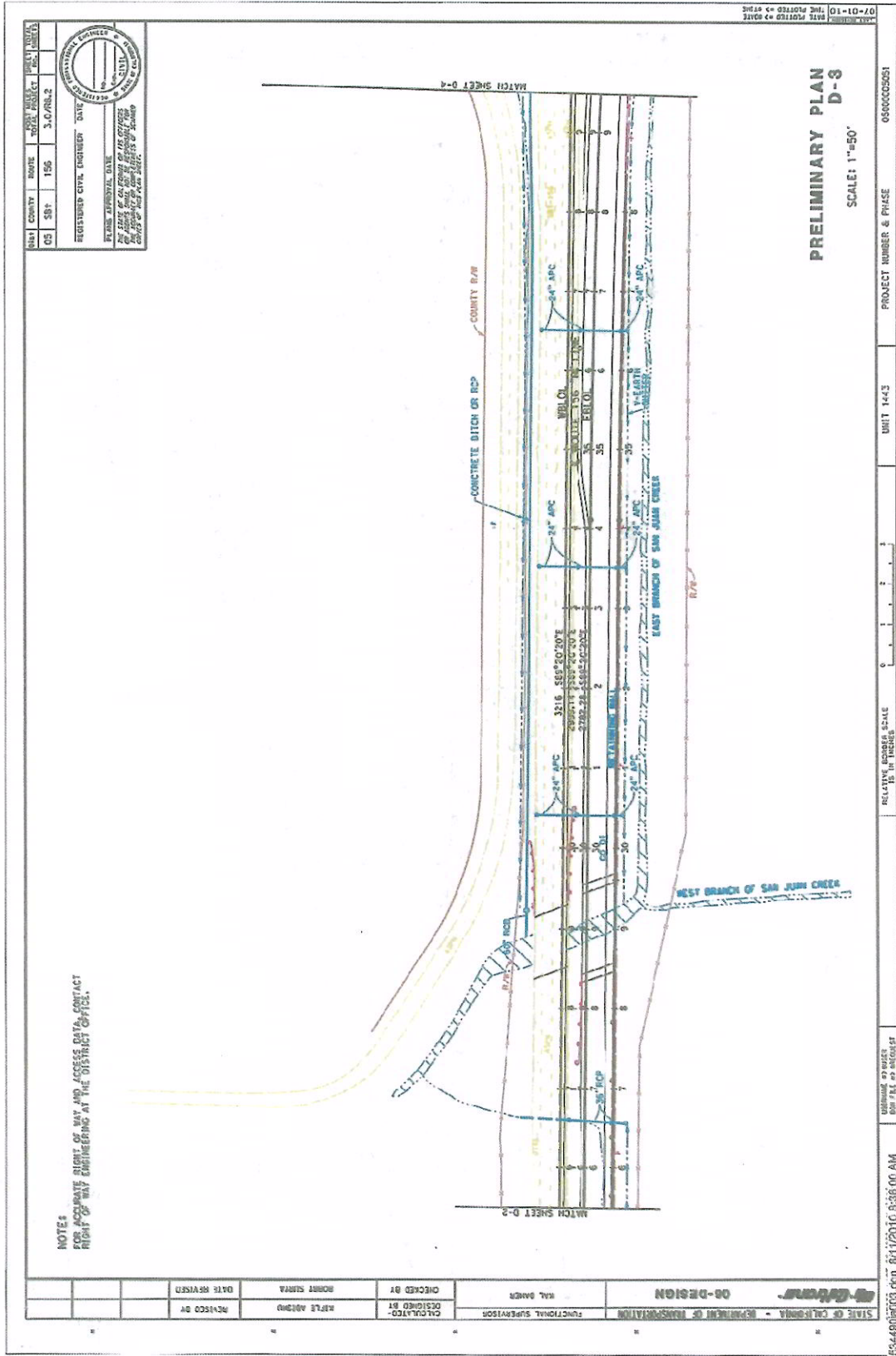






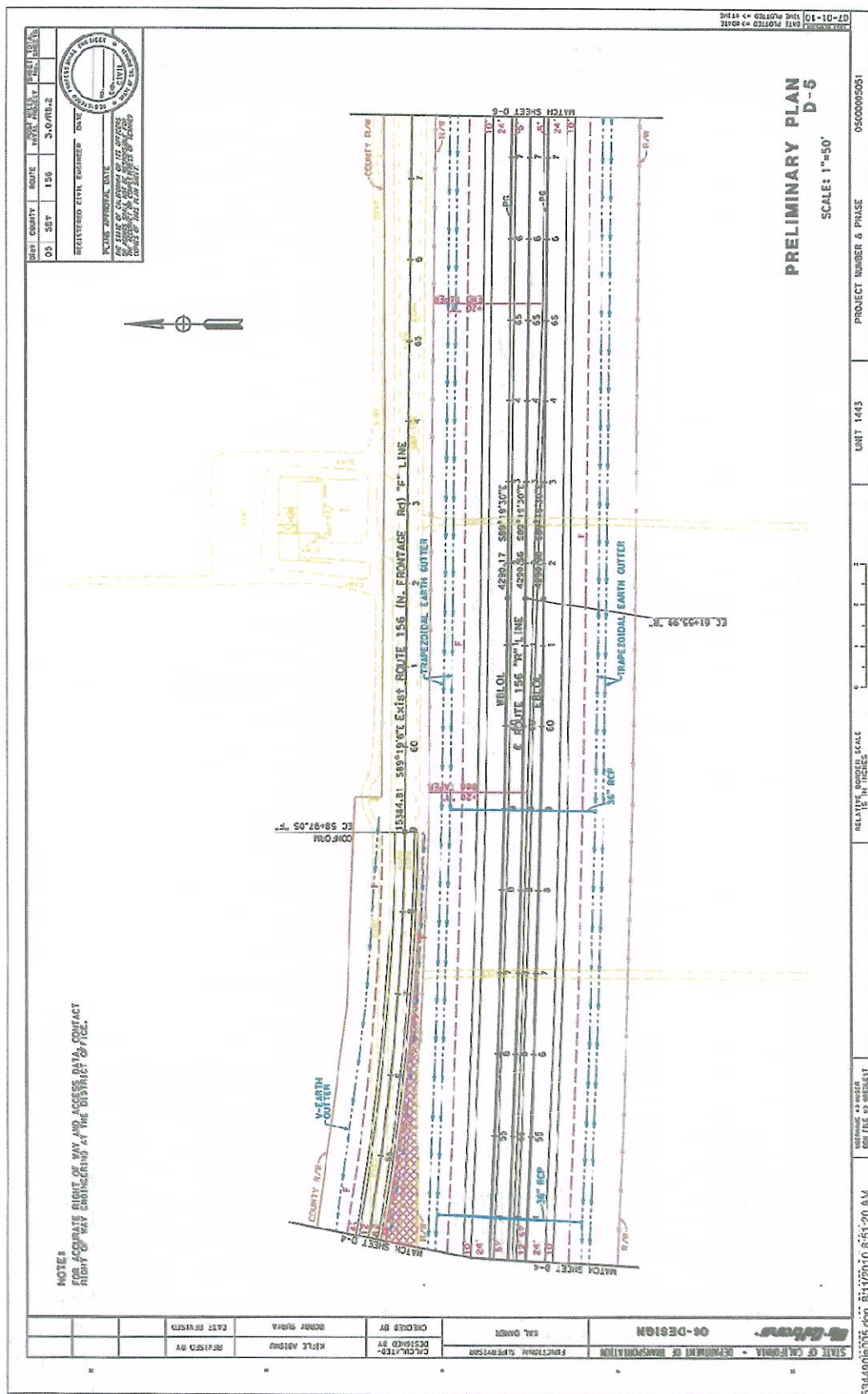




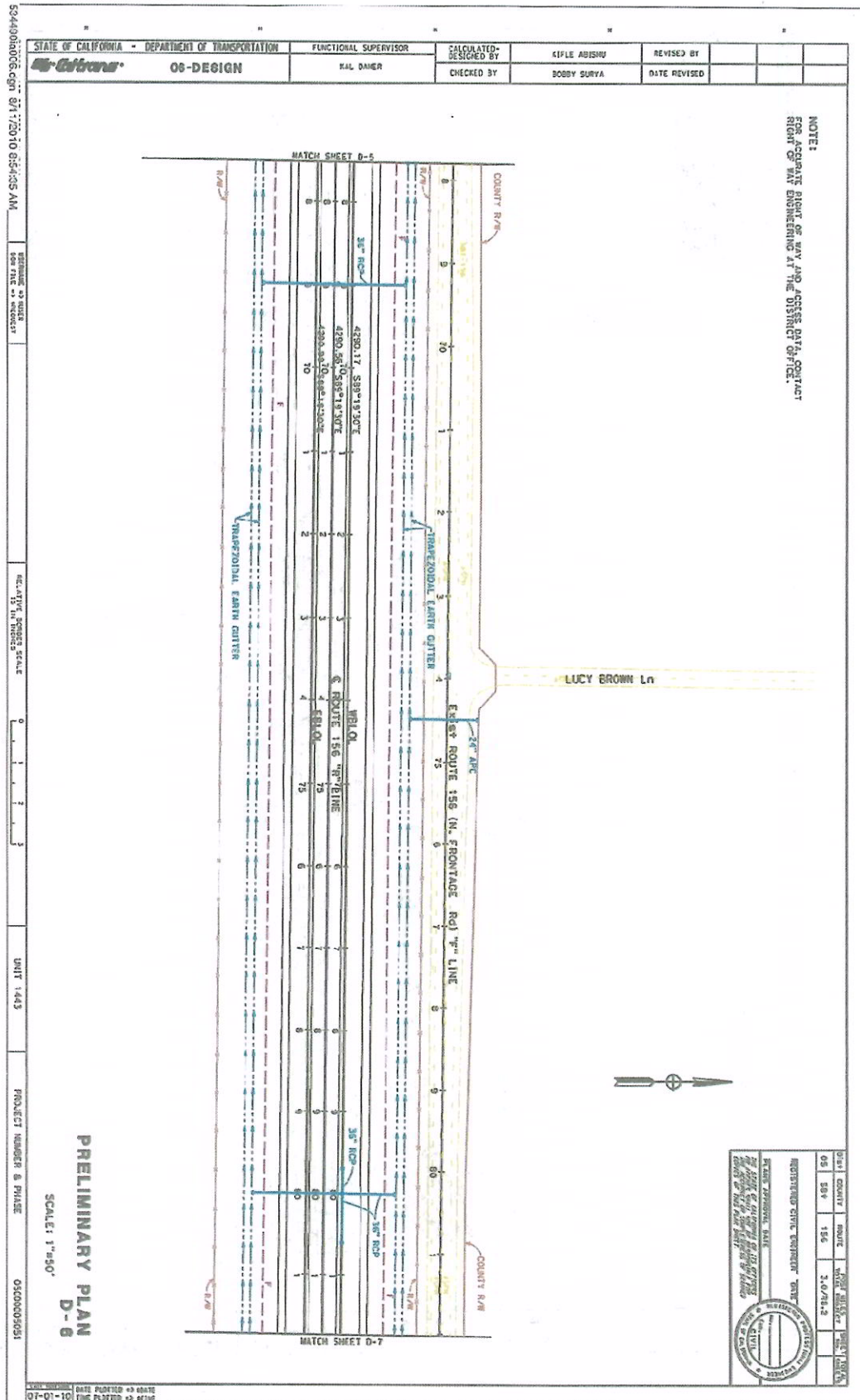






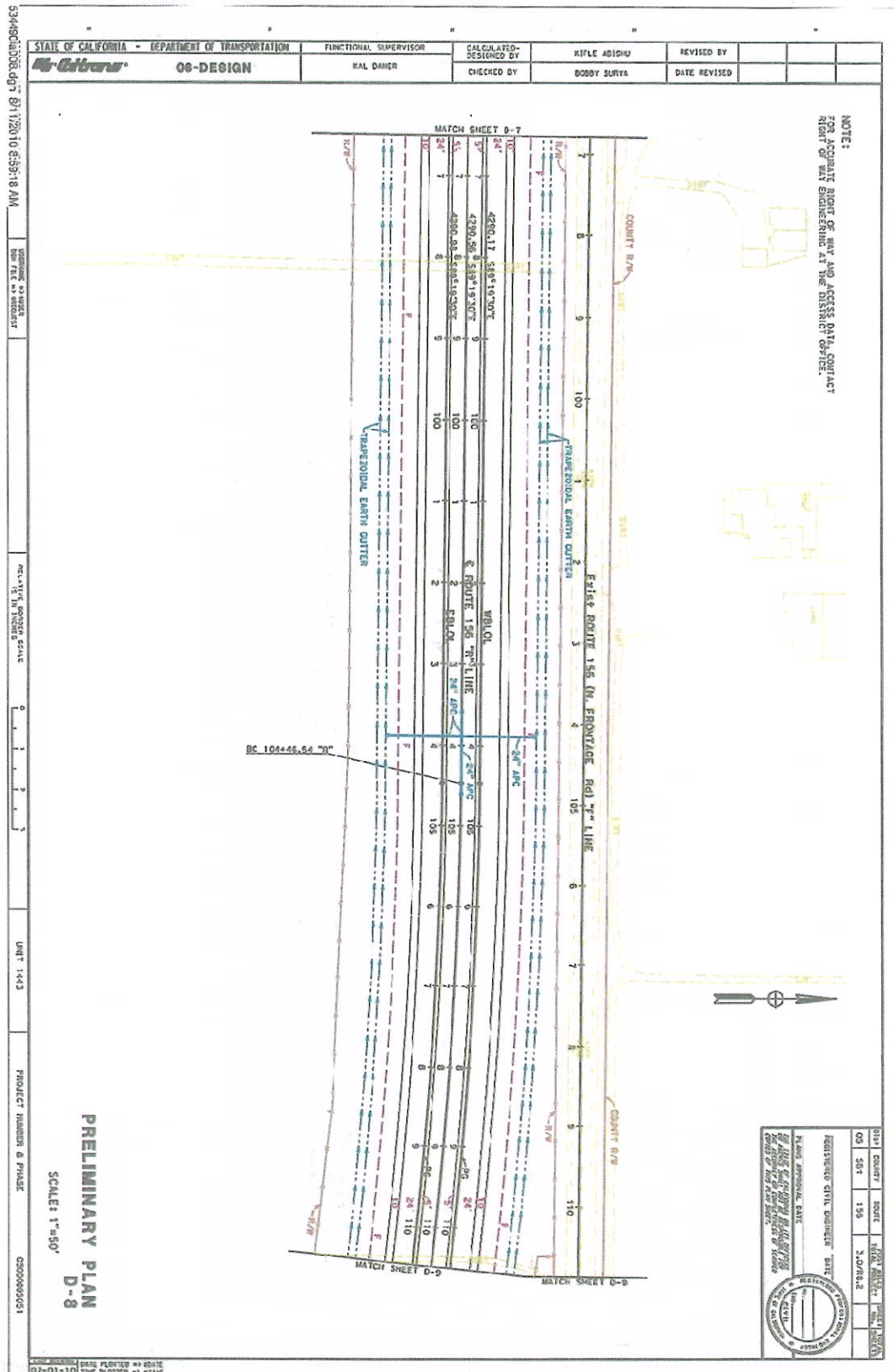


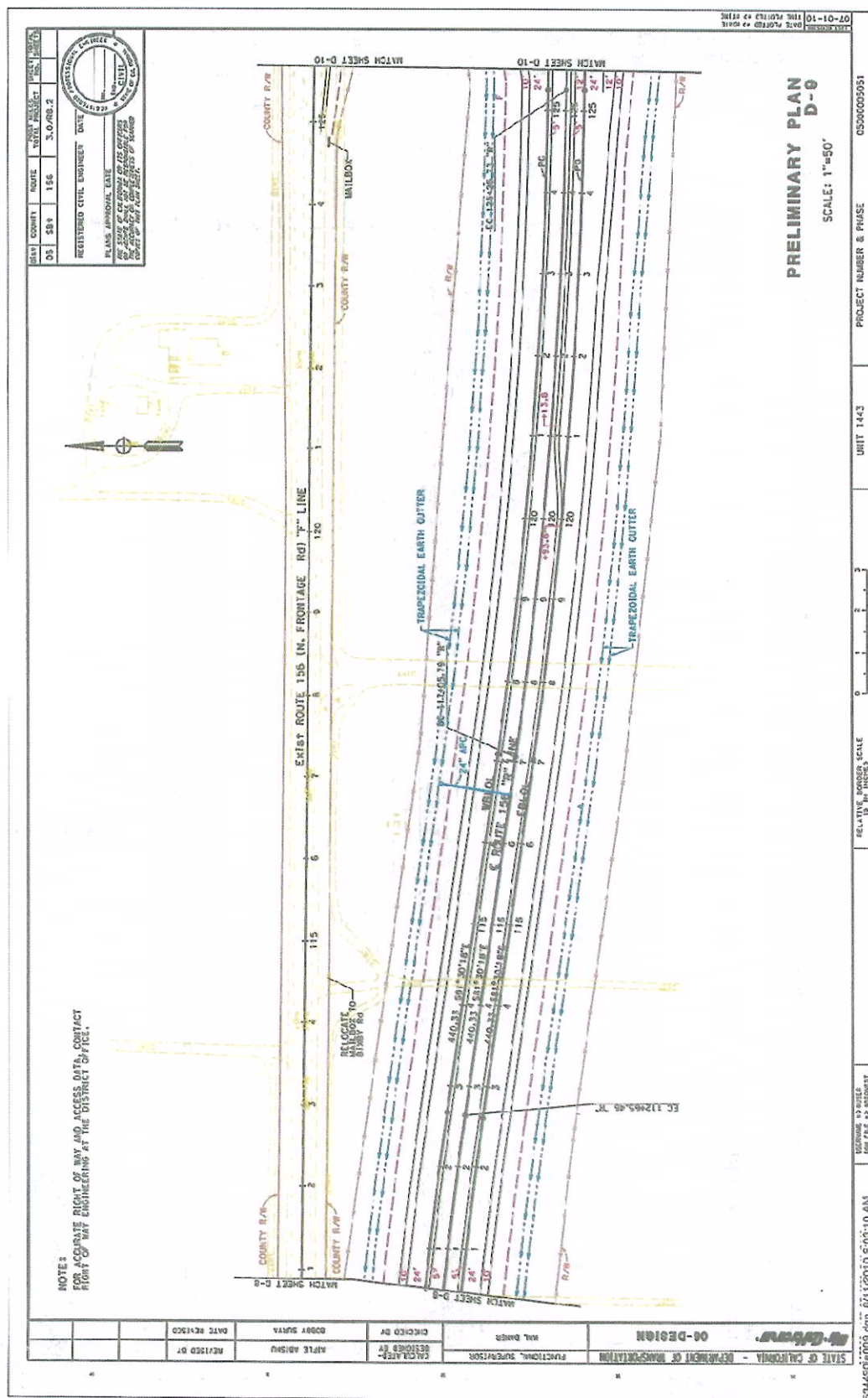




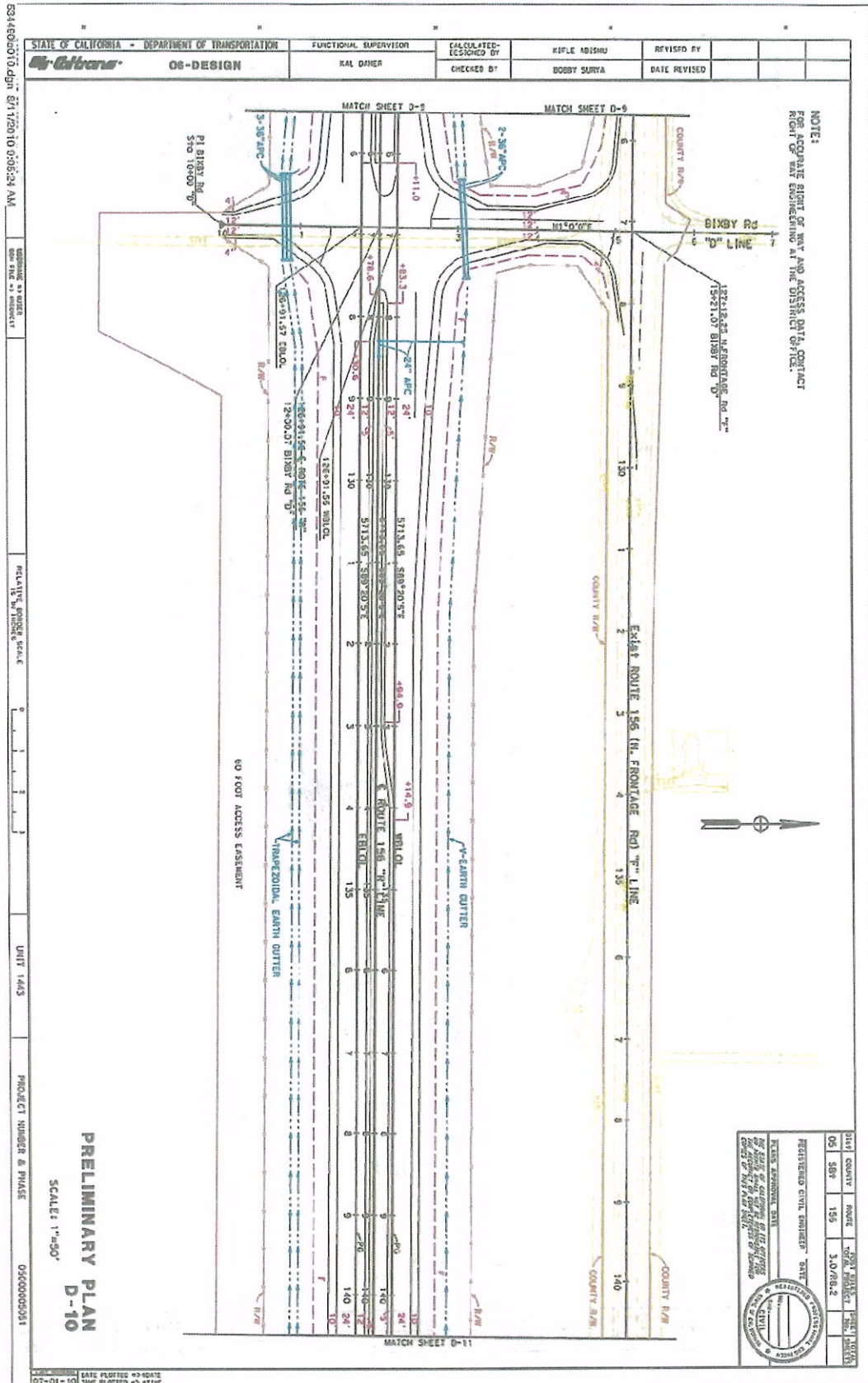


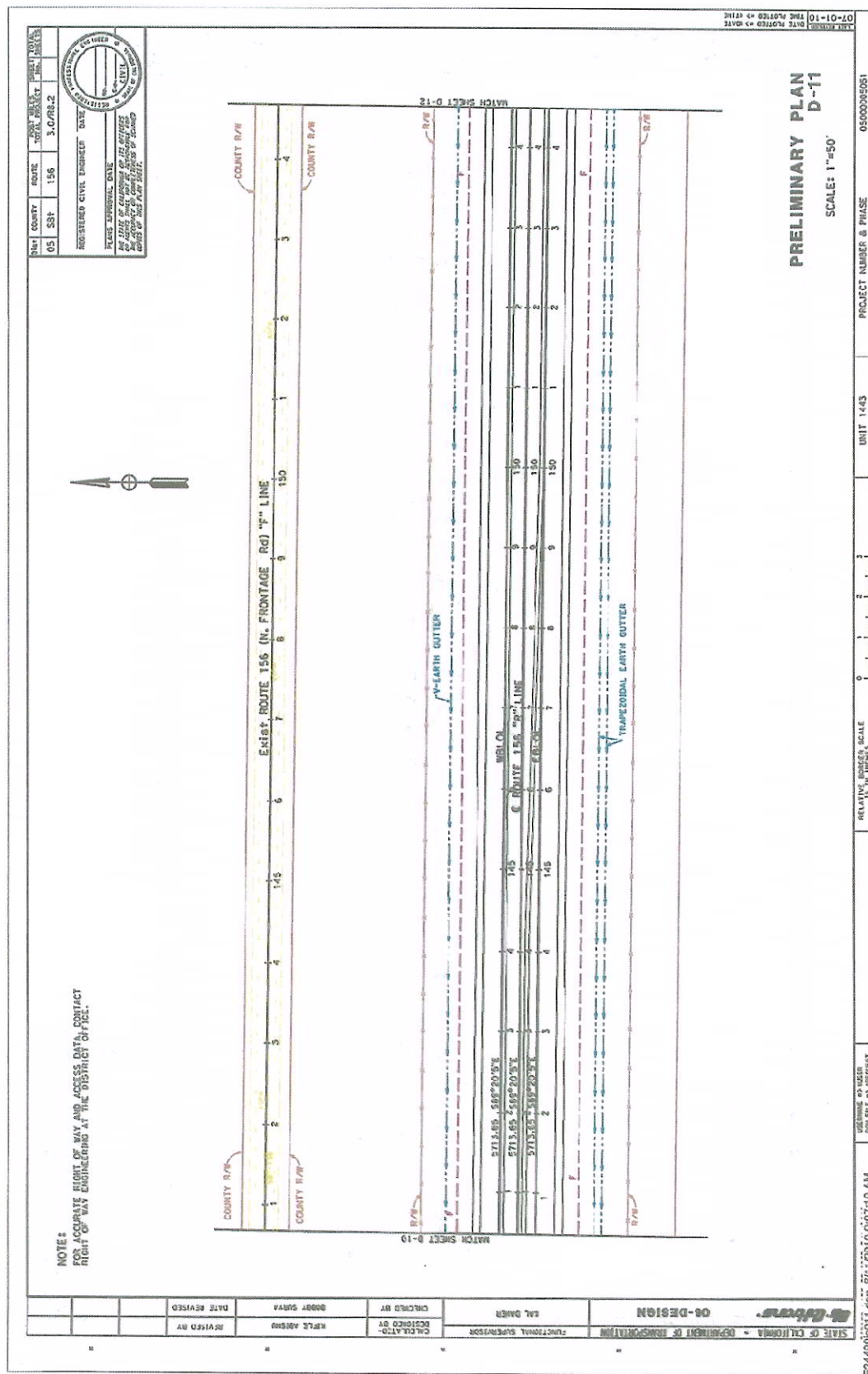




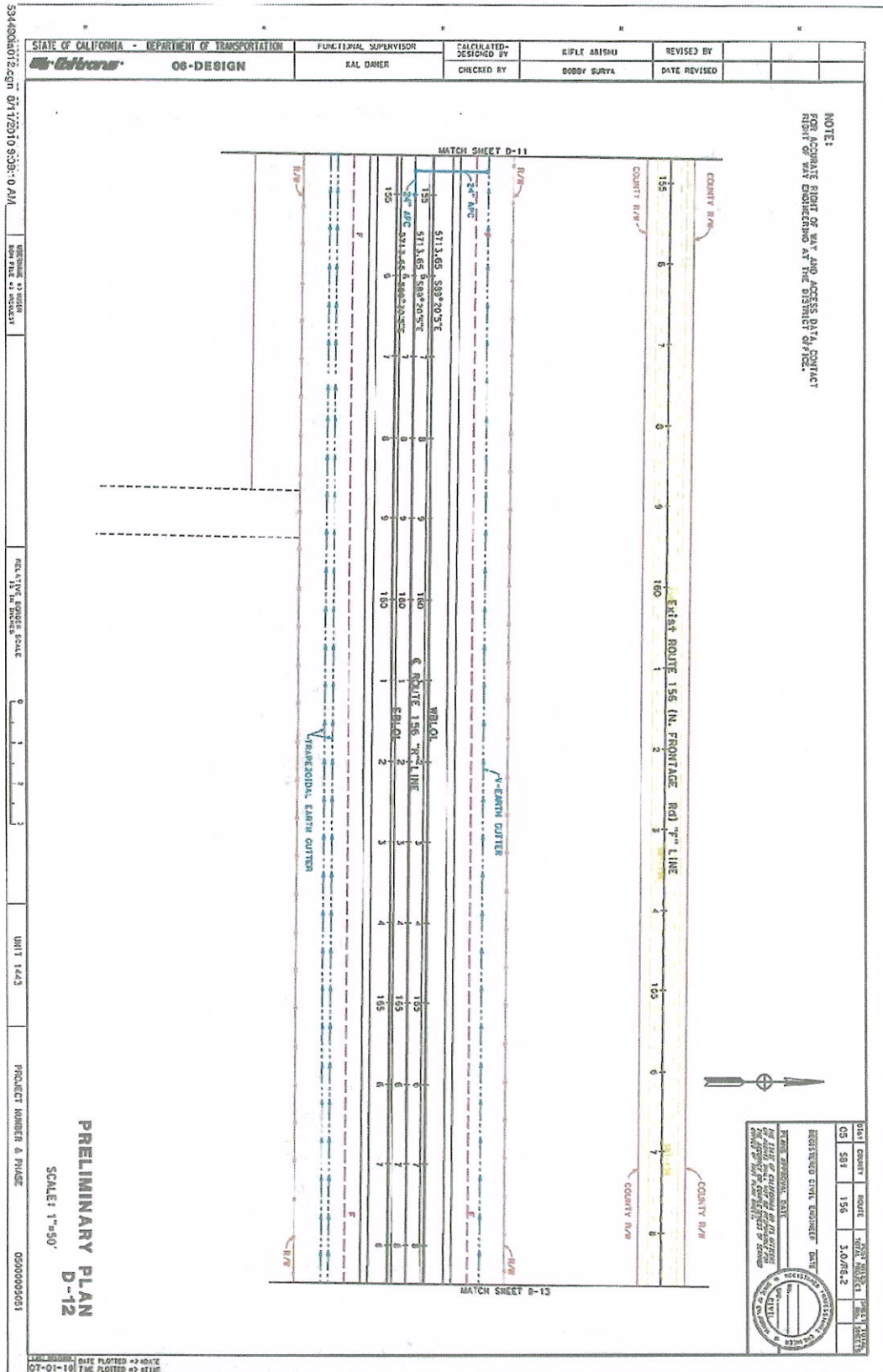


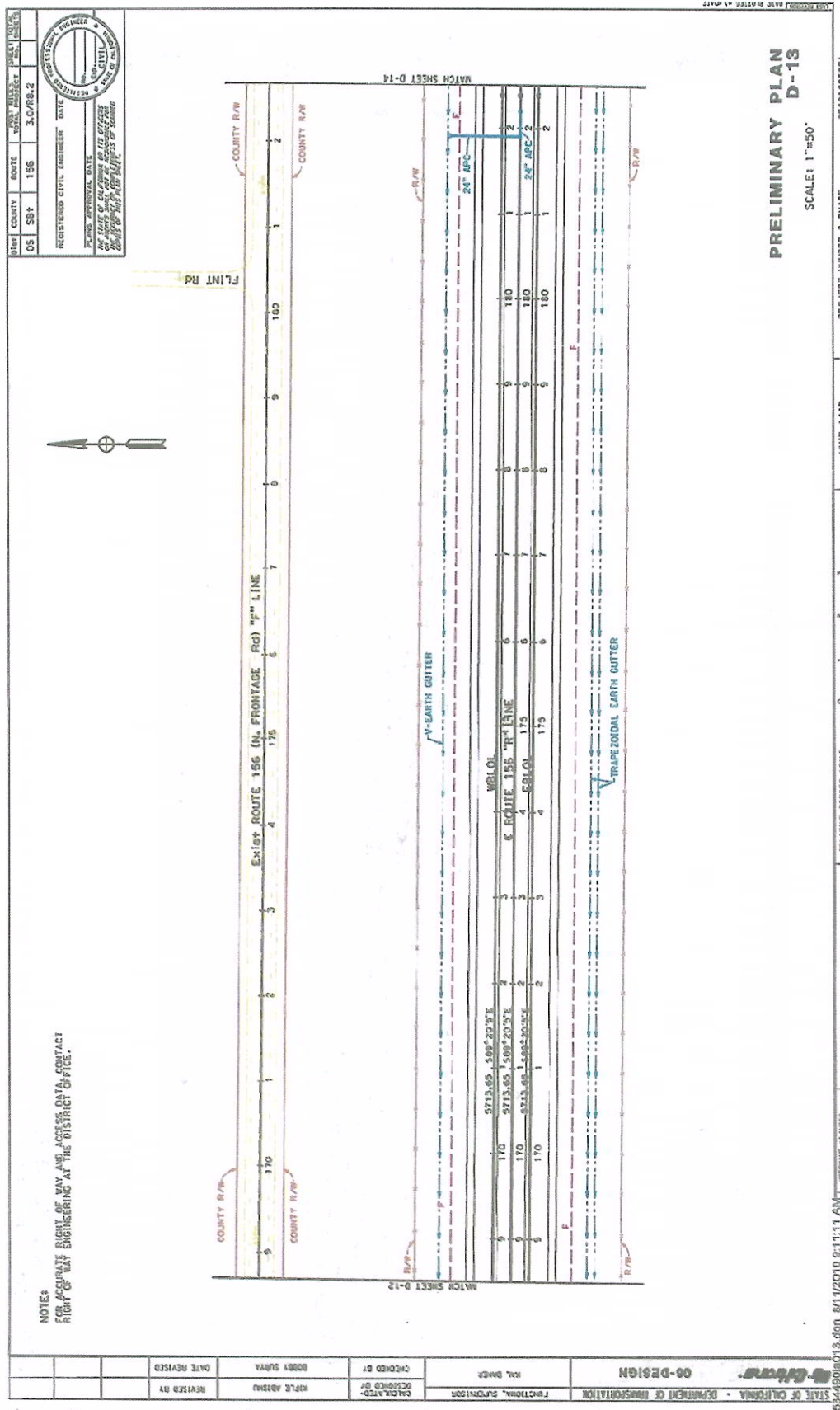




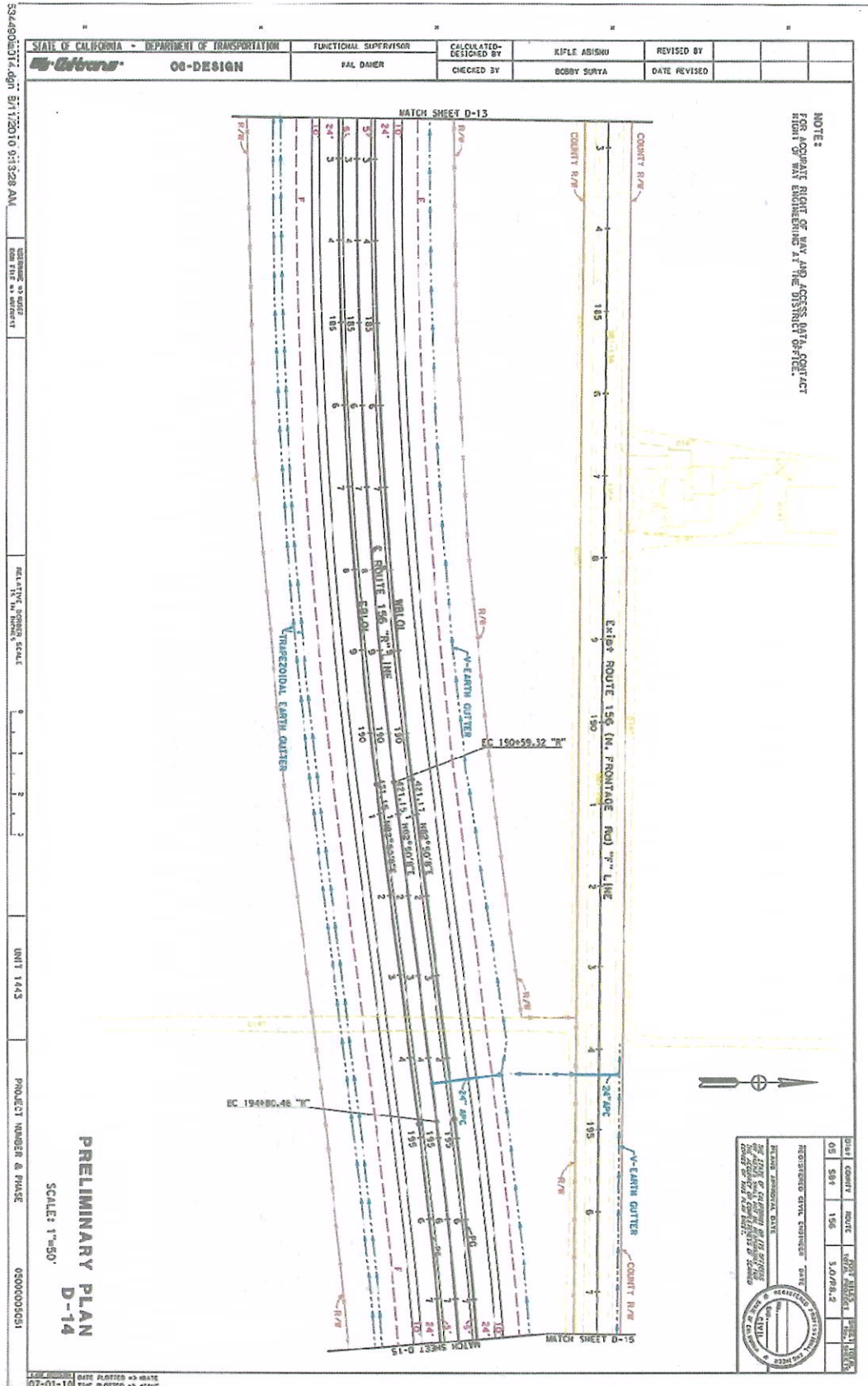






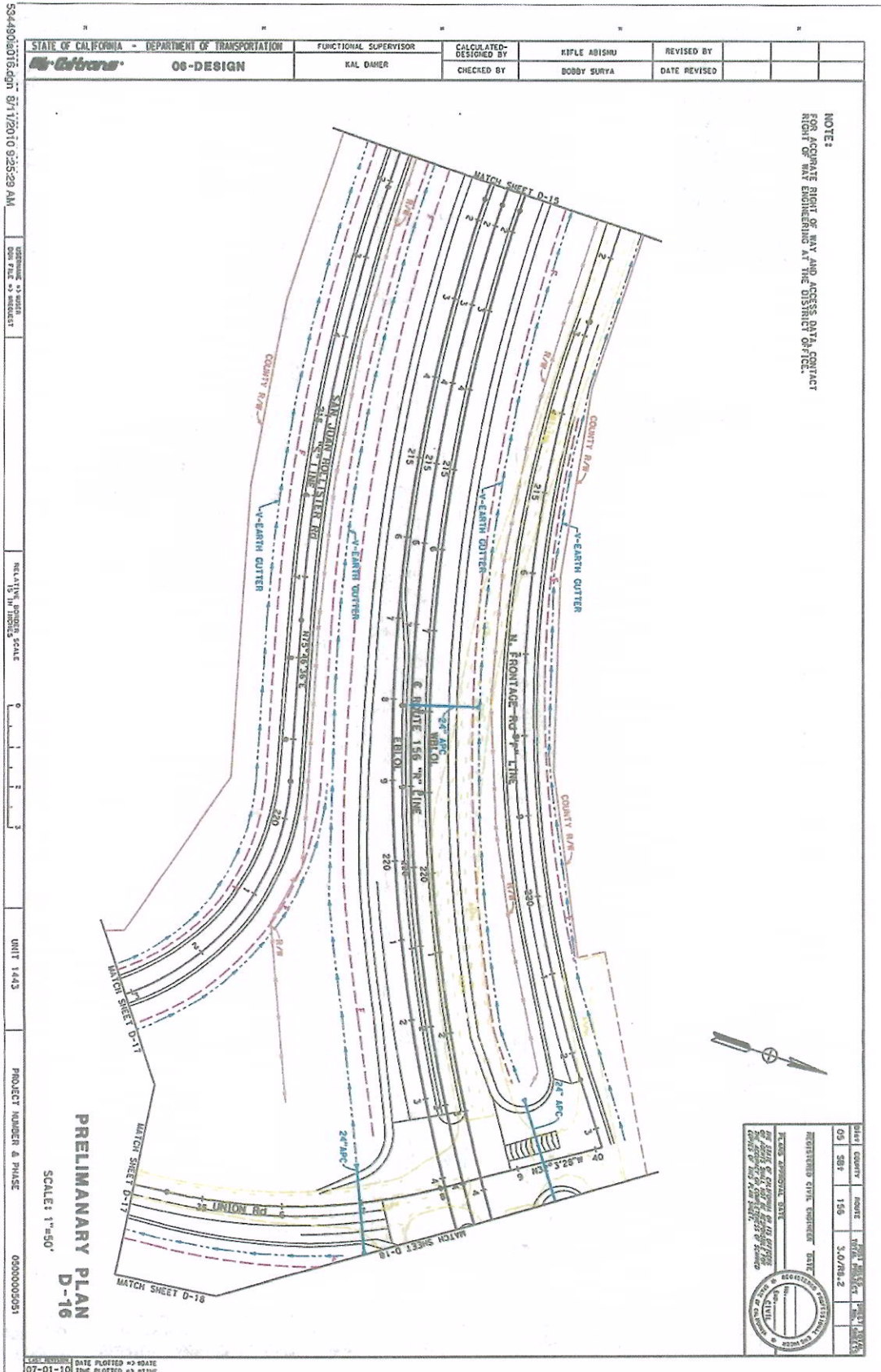


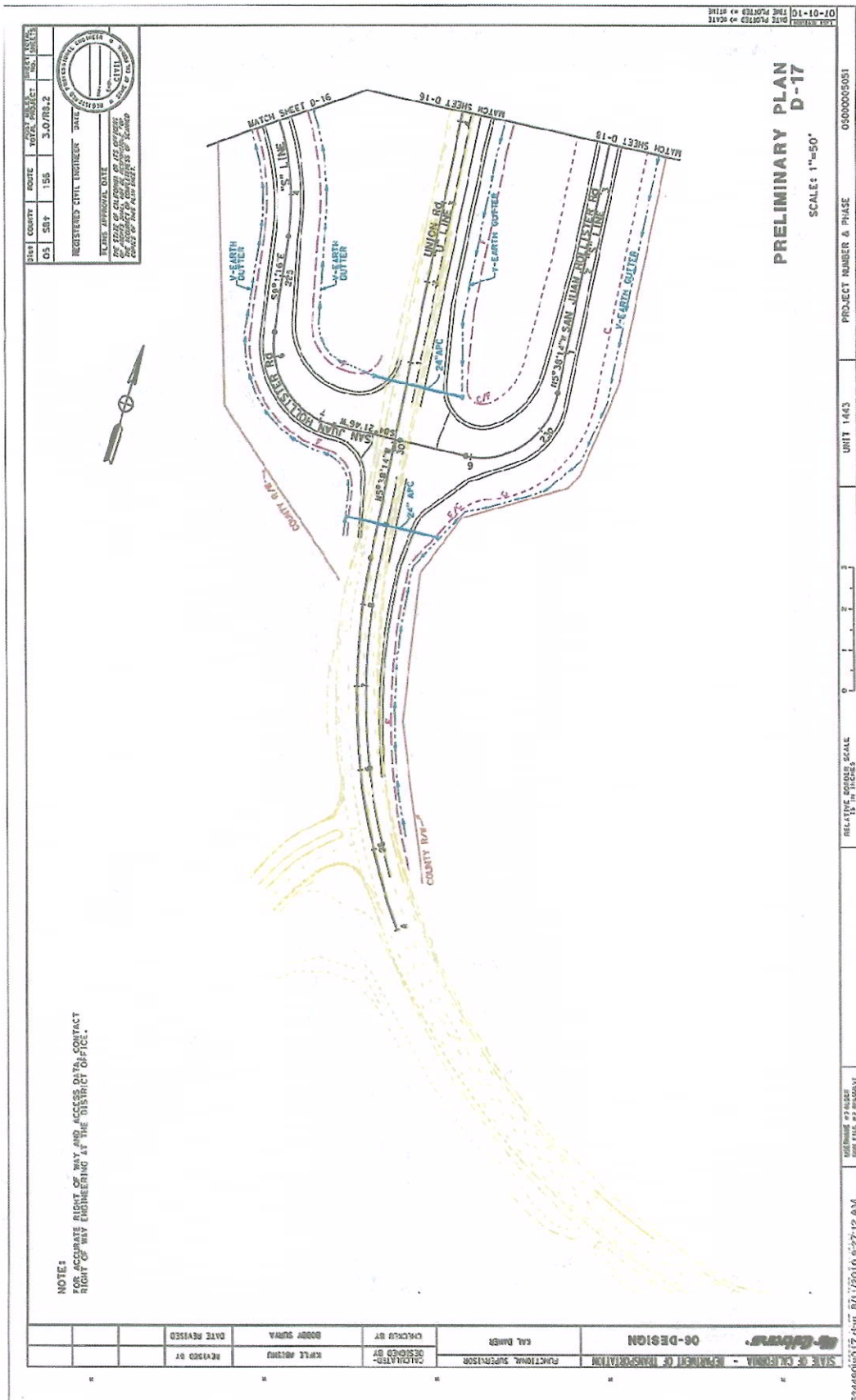




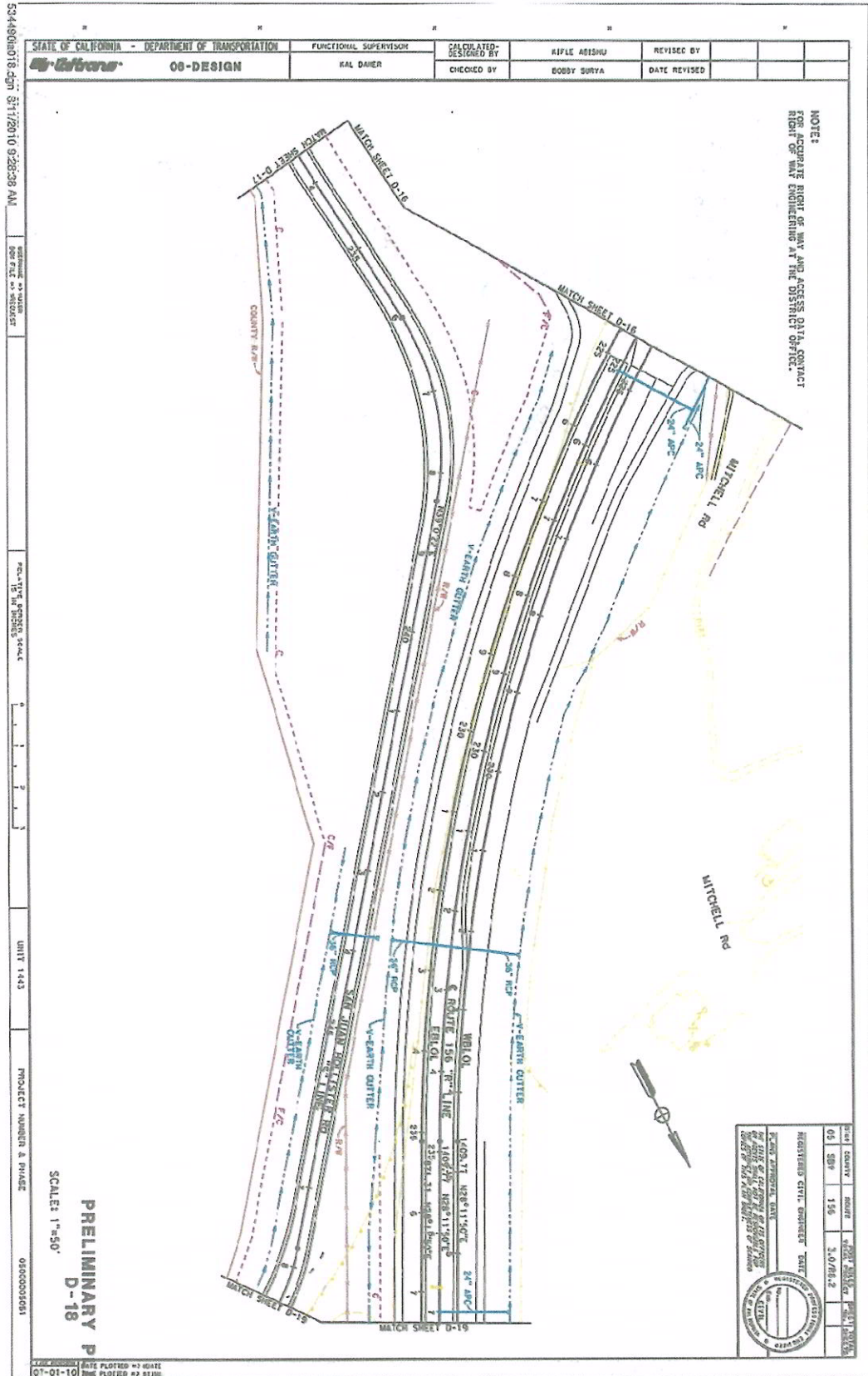






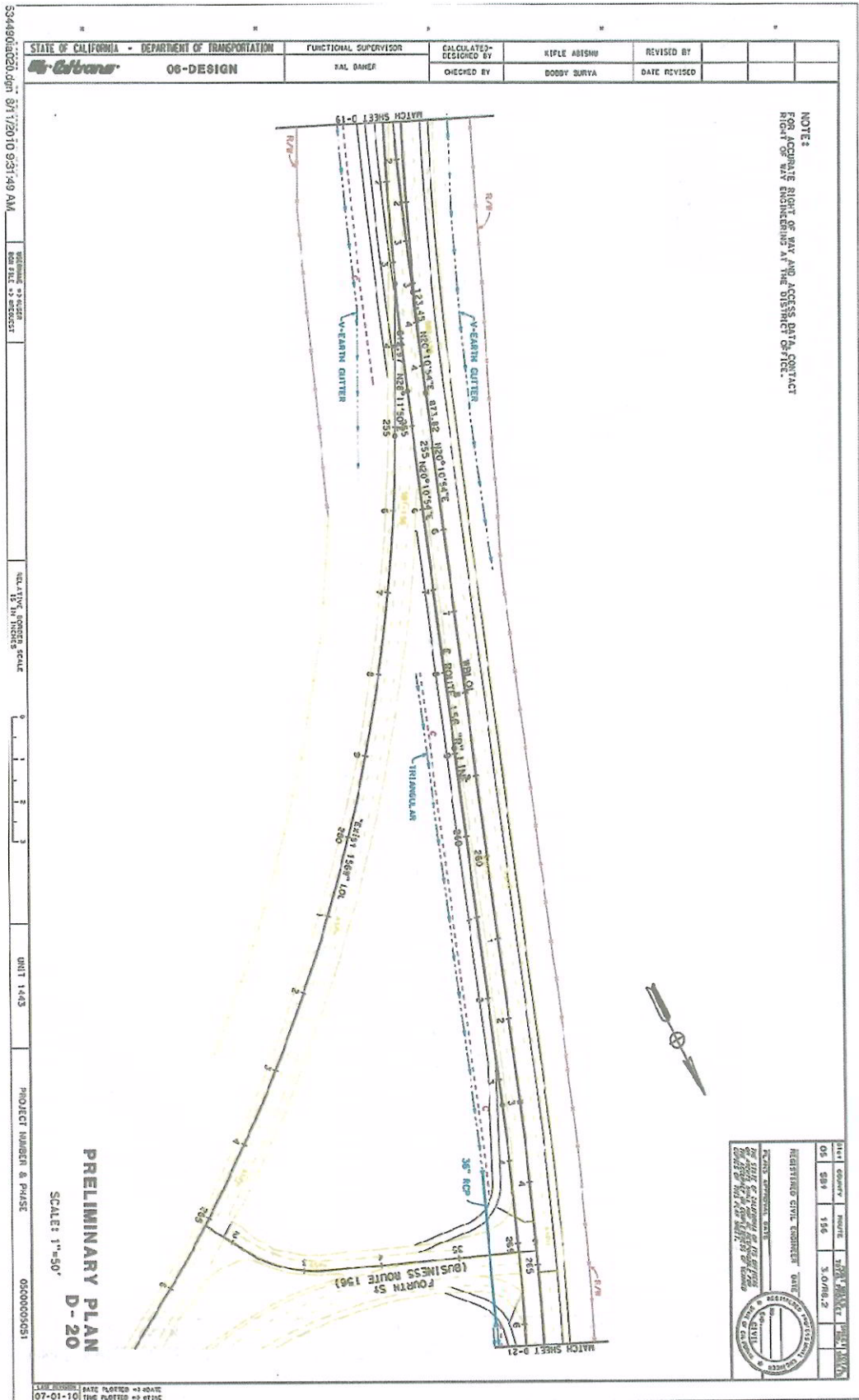


















# **Appendix C    Public Comment and Response**

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## **Introduction to Response to Comments**

Appendix C presents all the written comments received on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. The public comment period for the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report began March 21, 2011 and ended May 5, 2011. Comments submitted after the end date were accepted but categorized as being late. An open forum public hearing was held in San Juan Bautista on April 6, 2011 to further solicit public comment on the environmental document in.

The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contained only the information necessary to make the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report adequate. People making comments were instructed to address only those four areas discussed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report; however, some submitted comments pertained to other aspects of the project. Although all comments received were appreciated, Caltrans only responded to those comments addressing the four areas discussed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report.

Several approaches have been used to respond to comments. Some comments were statements of information or opinion; these comments have been acknowledged for the public record. Other comments asked for additional information or for clarification of information presented in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report.

Where appropriate, the responses to these comments are provided in this appendix. Responses to comments presented in the text of the Final Environmental Impact Report are referenced by the text section in response to the comment.

## **Organization**

This appendix is organized according to the parties' comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report:

- Section 1.0 State Agencies
- Section 2.0 Local and Regional Agencies
- Section 3.0 Individual Comments Submitted through US mail and e-mail
- Section 4.0 Comment Cards from the Open Forum Public Hearing
- Section 5.0 Transcripts from the Open Forum Public Hearing
- Section 6.0 Late Comments and other material



No comments were received from any federal agencies or organizations. No petitions or requests for map and project information were received.

For Sections 1.0 through 3.0, responses were withheld until after each letter or e-mail. On each e-mail or letter, comments are assigned a number in the right-hand margin and a corresponding response is provided. Caltrans responded to all comments, addressing only the four areas discussed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report.

For Sections 4.0 and 5.0, responses are withheld until the end of each section. Comments are assigned a number in the right-hand margin and a corresponding response is provided. Caltrans responded to all comments addressing only the four areas discussed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report.

Section 6.0 displays comments received after the comment period ended.

## Section 1.0 State Agencies

### State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit, page 1 of 2



JERRY BROWN  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE of PLANNING AND RESEARCH  
STATE CLEARINGHOUSE AND PLANNING UNIT



May 5, 2011

G. William "Trais" Norris III  
California Department of Transportation  
2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726

Subject: 05-SBT-156 PM 3.0/R8.2 San Benito 156 Improvement Project  
SCH#: 2002091009

Dear G. William "Trais" Norris III:

The State Clearinghouse submitted the above named Subsequent EIR to selected state agencies for review. The review period closed on May 4, 2011, and no state agencies submitted comments by that date. This letter acknowledges that you have complied with the State Clearinghouse review requirements for draft environmental documents, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.

Please call the State Clearinghouse at (916) 445-0613 if you have any questions regarding the environmental review process. If you have a question about the above-named project, please refer to the ten-digit State Clearinghouse number when contacting this office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Morgan".

Scott Morgan  
Director, State Clearinghouse

1400 10th Street P.O. Box 3044 Sacramento, California 95812-3044  
(916) 445-0613 FAX (916) 323-3018 [www.opr.ca.gov](http://www.opr.ca.gov)



## State Clearinghouse and Planning Unit, page 2 of 2

Document Details Report  
State Clearinghouse Data Base

**SCH#** 2002091009  
**Project Title** 05-SBT-156 PM 3.0/R8.2 San Benito 156 Improvement Project  
**Lead Agency** Caltrans #6

**Type** SBE Subsequent EIR  
**Description** Note: Review Per Lead

The proposed project would widen State Route 156 from a two-lane conventional highway to a four-lane expressway from The Alameda in San Juan Bautista to 0.2 mile east of Fourth Street (Business Route 156). Between Mission Vineyard Road and Union/Mitchell Road, widening would be on new alignment south of the existing State Route 156 with a new intersection at Bixby Road. The existing State route 180 would be used as a northern frontage road and access would be provided on the south by frontage roads or private access easements. The median would range between 30 to 46 feet and the roadway would be raised up to 5 feet for drainage purposes. The purpose of the project is to improve route continuity, reduce congestion, and increase safety.

**Lead Agency Contact**

**Name** G. William "Trais" Norris III  
**Agency** California Department of Transportation  
**Phone** (559) 243-8178 **Fax**  
**email**  
**Address** 2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100  
**City** Fresno **State** CA **Zip** 93726

**Project Location**

**County** San Benito  
**City** San Juan Bautista  
**Region**  
**Lat / Long**  
**Cross Streets** SR-156 & The Alameda  
**Parcel No.**  
**Township** **Range** **Section** **Base**

**Proximity to:**

**Highways** Hwy 101, 25  
**Airports** Hollister  
**Railways**  
**Waterways** San Benito River  
**Schools** San Juan ES  
**Land Use** Existing facility passes through 1 mile of the city limits zoned; remainder passes through rural area zoned agricultural

**Project Issues** Agricultural Land; Biological Resources; Flood Plain/Flooding; Noise

**Reviewing Agencies** Resources Agency; Department of Conservation; Department of Fish and Game, Region 4; Office of Historic Preservation; Department of Parks and Recreation; Central Valley Flood Protection Board; Caltrans, Division of Aeronautics; California Highway Patrol; Air Resources Board, Transportation Projects; Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 3; Native American Heritage Commission; State Lands Commission

**Date Received** 03/18/2011 **Start of Review** 03/21/2011 **End of Review** 05/04/2011

Note: Blanks in data fields result from insufficient information provided by lead agency.

***Response to State Clearinghouse***

Thank you for acknowledging that Caltrans has complied with the public circulation requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.



## California Transportation Commission, page 1 of 2

DARIO FROMMER, Chair  
JAMES C. GHIEMMETTI, Vice Chair  
BOB ALVARADO  
DARIUS ASSEMI  
YVONNE B. BURKE  
LUCETTA DUNN  
JAMES EARP  
CARL GUARDINO  
FRAN INMAN  
JOSEPH TAVAGLIONE

SENATOR MARK DESAULNIER, Ex Officio  
ASSEMBLY MEMBER BONNIE LOWENTHAL, Ex Officio

BIMLA G. RHINEHART, Executive Director

STATE OF CALIFORNIA



EDMUND G. BROWN Jr., Governor

### CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

1120 N STREET, MS-52  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814  
P. O. BOX 942873  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94273-0001  
FAX (916) 653-2134  
(916) 654-4245  
<http://www.catc.ca.gov>

April 26, 2011

Mr. G. William "Trais" Norris III, Branch Chief  
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch  
Department of Transportation, District 6  
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 92726

RE: Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the State Route 156 Improvement Project

Dear Mr. Norris,

The California Transportation Commission, as a Responsible Agency, received the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the State Route 156 Improvement Project that would widen the existing two-lane conventional highway to a four-lane expressway in San Benito County. It is our understanding that the project will be funded through a combination of State Transportation Improvement (STIP) and local funds. The project is estimated to cost \$69,611,000.

The Commission has no comments regarding the environmental issues or project alternatives to be addressed in the DEIR. However, since consideration of the environmental impacts of a project are required prior to the Commission's allocation of funds for design, right of way or construction activities as well as for new public road connections and route adoptions, notification should be provided to the Commission, as a Responsible Agency, upon completion of the environmental process.

In addition, prior to the Commission's action to approve the project for future consideration of funding, the Commission expects the lead and/or implementing agency to provide written assurance whether the selected alternative identified in the final environmental document is or is not consistent with the project programmed by the Commission and included in the Regional Transportation Plan. In the absence of such assurance of consistency, it may be assumed that the project is not consistent and Commission staff will base its recommendations to the Commission on that fact. The Commission may deny funding to a project which is no longer eligible for funding due to scope modification or other reasons.

1

2

## California Transportation Commission, page 2 of 2

Mr. Norris  
April 26, 2011  
Page 2 of 2

If you have any questions, please contact Susan Bransen, Associate Deputy Director, at (916) 653-2082.

Sincerely,



BIMLA G. RHINEHART  
Executive Director

c: Jay Norvell, Chief, Caltrans Environmental Analysis  
Rachel Falsetti, Chief, Caltrans Programming



***Response to California Transportation Commission***

1. Notification would be provided to the California Transportation Commission regarding completion of the environmental process.
2. Written assurance would be provided when funding is requested that the project is properly programmed in the Regional Transportation Plan.

## Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 3, page 1 of 2



David Innis  
<DBInnis@waterboards.ca.gov>

04/28/2011 12:51 PM

To <trais\_norris@dot.ca.gov>

cc <julie\_dick\_tex@dot.ca.gov>, Arman Nazemi  
<ANazemi@pw.co.san-benito.ca.us>

bcc

Subject Draft Supplemental EIR SR 156 Improvement Project

History:

This message has been forwarded.

G. William "Trais" Norris III  
Environmental Branch Chief  
California Department of Transportation  
2015 East Shields Ave., Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726

re: SCH: 2002091009 – Widen SR 156 from The Alameda in San Juan  
Bautista to 0.2 mile east of Fourth Street in San Benito County

Dear Mr. Norris,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Supplemental EIR for the SR 156 Improvement Project submitted by CalTrans. Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) staff understands that this project involves construction, operation and maintenance of the widening of SR 156 in the above titled area. The Supplemental EIR responds to the additional analysis or information in regard to hydrology, noise, California tiger salamander, and farmland impacts, as ordered by the San Benito County Superior Court.

The Water Board is a responsible agency charged with the protection of Waters of the State of California in the Central Coast Region. Waters of the State include surface waters, groundwaters, and wetlands. The Water Board is responsible for administering regulations established by the Federal Clean Water Act and the California Water Code. These regulations cover discharges to surface water and groundwater, as well as discharges to land that may affect ground water. The Water Board also administers regulations established by the Central Coast Region Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan).

To facilitate comprehensive environmental evaluation of this project, I offer the following comments for your review.

In Chapter 2 section titled Impacts (page 16), the Draft Supplemental EIR states:

"The existing State Route 156 is elevated above the 100-year flow elevation from approximately 600 feet east of The Alameda to the San Juan Creek. At this location, CalTrans does not propose raising the roadway profile any higher, which would result in the 100-year flow of the San Juan Creek tributary to continue overtopping State Route 156."

I talked with CalTrans staff (Julie Dick Tex) about this statement that does not correct a flood risk in the area between The Alameda and San Juan Creek tributary. Ms. Dick Tex indicated the City of San Juan Bautista was not receptive to changes in this area. As such, CalTrans left this statement to indicate the project does not worsen the problem.

I also talked with San Benito County engineer Arman Nazemi about this issue. Mr. Nazemi indicated that some of the reluctance was due to lack of funds to apply for permits to work in the creek to remove excessive vegetation that causes water to back up in this area and cause the

1

2

3



## Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 3, page 2 of 2

flooding. It seems a relatively reasonable solution could be found to correct this safety issue.

I would ask CalTrans consider assisting the County to obtain the permits to reduce this hazard. I recommend CalTrans work with Mr. Nazemi (831-636-4170; ANazemi@pw.co.san-benito.ca.us) to contact California Department of Fish & Game in Fresno (Julie Means JMEANS@dfg.ca.gov or Kerrie Tucker 559-243-4014, ext. 230). Also work with Lt. John Nores (jnores@dfg.ca.gov) who supervises F&G field staff in this work area. The appropriate Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (1600 series) could allow the County to "scoop and lift" excess vegetation and debris out of the channel periodically to promote passage of storm flows. Working with the County and Fish and Game would support the Department's vision to provide "...the safest, best managed seamless transportation system..."

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the Draft Supplemental EIR for this project. If you have any questions about these comments please contact me at the information provided below.

David Innis, CPESC 5331  
Environmental Scientist  
Municipal, Construction, Industrial Stormwater, 401 Water Quality  
Certification

E-mail: dbinnis@waterboards.ca.gov.  
or  
Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 3  
895 Aerovista, Place., Suite 101  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401-7906  
(805) 549 - 3150 (voice)  
(805) 788-3586 (Fax)

### ***Response to Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 3***

1. Caltrans appreciates the comments submitted by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 3.
2. The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report was modified to clarify the first paragraph in Impacts (Chapter 2) to reflect the information provided in response number 3.
3. Your comment suggests a reasonable solution to the potential flooding west of San Juan Creek between The Alameda and San Juan Creek. Throughout the history of this project, the public has expressed a concern for downstream flooding, flooding at Mission Vineyard, and flooding at The Alameda. However, no one has reported a history of flooding west of San Juan Creek that could be attributed to the western tributary. Caltrans does not propose raising the elevation of the roadway west of San Juan Creek because a rise in elevation would not result in a significant improvement to the existing flooding conditions in that area.

State Route 156, between The Alameda and San Juan Creek, is already elevated. Caltrans proposes raising the elevation or profile of State Route 156 east of San Juan Creek to meet the similar level condition of the existing portion west of San Juan Creek. If the western portion was raised higher than the existing level, the eastern portion would have to be raised even higher than proposed, or the existing bridge would need to be replaced, which would result in additional environmental impacts.

Although Caltrans has taken the public's expressed concerns under consideration in designing the proposed improvements to San Juan Creek, the San Benito 156 Improvement project cannot fully address all the area's flooding issues. The purpose and need of the project is to address the highway flooding.

To help reduce the potential for highway flooding, the eastern tributary to San Juan Creek would be widened to increase the volume of water that can be stored before flowing under the bridge and downstream. Caltrans does propose the removal of excessive vegetation from San Juan Creek at the existing bridge and in the location of the new eastbound bridge. Caltrans does not propose removal of the vegetation from the western tributary to San Juan Creek.

4. Your request for Caltrans to assist San Benito County in addressing flooding issues is noted. There is no current plan to combine this project with a major flood management project because no other local agency has proposed one. The drainage ditches proposed in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project could be enlarged and redesigned to accommodate a joint flood-management project.



## Section 2.0 Local and Regional Agencies

### Council of San Benito County Governments, page 1 of 2



April 21, 2011

G. William "Trais" Norris III  
Branch Chief  
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch  
Caltrans  
2015 East Shields Avenue, Ste. 100  
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

**RE: Comments on the Supplemental EIR for the San Benito Route 156 Improvement Project**

Dear Mr. Norris:

The Council of San Benito County Governments submits this letter for comment on the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the San Benito Route 156 Improvement Project.

The Council of Governments submitted comments on the draft EIR in October 2007. The comments below are limited to the topics discussed in the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report dated March 2011.

The Council of Governments is committed to maintaining the rural and historic character of the County. To that end, the 2010 Regional Transportation Plan identifies the preservation of prime agricultural land as a goal. The Council of Governments commends Caltrans for further reducing agricultural land impacts as stated in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report by reducing the number of acres needed for the project.

To the extent feasible and appropriate, the Council of Governments recommends that Caltrans look for additional ways to reduce the footprint of the project while still increasing safety and improving traffic operations.

The Council of Governments supports Caltrans' commitment to partner with property owners to buy conservation easements to preserve agricultural land in San Juan Valley or other areas of the County to mitigate the impacts of the project. The Council of Governments recommends that Caltrans limit conservation easements to the San Juan Valley and San Benito County area. Additionally, the Council of Governments recommends conserving agricultural lands to a greater extent than on a one-to-one basis.

The Council of Governments urges Caltrans to use these strategies to protect and preserve agricultural land while, at the same time, increasing safety and improving mobility for commuters, agricultural operations, and commodity travel.

*Council of Governments ♦ Measure A Authority  
Airport Land Use Commission ♦ Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways  
330 Tres Pinos Road, Suite C7 ♦ Hollister, CA 95023 ♦ Phone: 831.637.7665 ♦ Fax: 831.636.4160  
www.sanbenitocog.org*

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## Council of San Benito County Governments, page 2 of 2

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft SEIR for the San Benito Route 156 Improvement Project. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Rheinheimer, Executive Director, at (831) 637-7665.

Sincerely,

  
Jaime De La Cruz  
Chair

cc: Gary Armstrong, San Benito County Planning Department

---

*Council of Governments ♦ Measure A Authority*  
*Airport Land Use Commission ♦ Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways*  
330 Tres Pinos Road, Suite C7 ♦ Hollister, CA 95023 ♦ Phone: 831.637.7665 ♦ Fax: 831.636.4160  
[www.sanbenitocog.org](http://www.sanbenitocog.org)



### ***Response to Council of San Benito County Governments***

1. Caltrans appreciates the comments submitted by the Council of San Benito County Governments.
2. The commitment expressed by the Council of Governments to maintain the rural and historic character of San Benito County, and the goal of preserving agricultural land contained in the 2010 Regional Transportation Plan are noted. Caltrans appreciates the support expressed for Caltrans' efforts in further reducing agricultural land impacts.
3. Caltrans appreciates the support expressed for Caltrans' efforts in mitigating agricultural land impacts. The Council of Government's recommendation to limit conservation easements to the San Juan Valley or San Benito County, and to use a higher ratio than 1-acre-to-1-acre is noted. Caltrans will take the recommendations into consideration but the development of conservation easements nearby depends on the availability of the land, the willingness of the property owner, and the availability of the funds to acquire the easements, none of which Caltrans has the ultimate control over.

County of San Benito Board of Supervisors, page 1 of 3



**COUNTY OF SAN BENITO  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

481 Fourth Street, Hollister, CA 95023  
Phone: 831-636-4000 Fax: 831-636-4010

www.san-benito.ca.us  
sbcsuper@supervisor.co.sanbenito.ca.us

April 26, 2011

G William "Trais" Norris III  
Branch Chief  
Sierra Pacific Environmental Analysis Branch  
Caltrans  
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

Re: Comments to Supplemental EIR-Highway 156

Dear Mr. Norris:

The San Benito County Board of Supervisors herein submits its comments to the Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on Highway 156 improvements. These comments are categorized into three separate sections: Preservation of Prime Agricultural Land, Hydrology (Drainage) and Noise. The Board of Supervisors officially approved these comments at its meeting on Tuesday April 26, 2011.

**Preservation of Prime Agricultural Land**

The Board of Supervisors adopted resolution No. 2006-109 (attached) which states that the San Benito Board of Supervisors is desirous of maintaining, to every extent possible, the rural and historic character of the county and to secure the most environmentally compatible alternatives to these transportation projects while preserving prime agricultural land in the county.

It is our belief that there are more environmentally compatible alternatives to preserve prime agricultural land in the San Juan Valley than what is being proposed. While the EIR states this project will displace 120 acres of agricultural land the Board believes that when one takes into consideration the land between the southern most lane of the proposed new expressway and the northern lane of the proposed frontage road it appears to the Board the displaced land may well exceed 120 acres. The EIR proposes to mitigate this displacement by providing for an offset of other land either in or outside of San

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## County of San Benito Board of Supervisors, page 2 of 3

Benito County. Furthermore the offset is based on the 120 acre proposed displacement and \$500,000 is proposed to pay for such displacement. Additionally, the EIR proposes an offset based on a 1:1 ratio.

The San Benito County Land Use Element Policy 3 state that “*grade one soils as identified in the Soils Survey of San Benito County shall be the highest priority for protection of soil resources.*” Any conversion of grade one soil would be inconsistent with this policy. To reduce the pressure for conversions of nearby agricultural lands and to maintain consistency with the San Benito County Land Use Element to protect grade one soils, mitigation shall be put into effect to place lands within San Benito County (emphasis added) with grade one soil classification into an agricultural open space easement at a 1:3 ratio. It should be further noted that the construction of a PG & E substation in the San Juan Valley requires a 1:4 acre easement.

Given these facts the Board of Supervisors considers the proposed 120 acre displacement and the mitigation of this displacement at a 1:1 ratio with easements within and outside the county as spurious. The EIR should reflect the accurate acreage and not consider mitigation outside San Benito County. Furthermore, the Board requests that the ratio be no less than 1:3.

#### Hydrology (Drainage)

The Flood Plain report details the anticipated reduction to water surface elevation in the various branches of the San Juan Creek as a result of the recommended project improvements. What is not clear is how these improvements (the removal of the flow restriction at the Highway 156-San Juan Creek Bridge and Mission Vineyard Box culvert) will impact the 100 year flood surface elevation north of the project.

Clarification is needed for the following concerns: What is the change in water surface elevation of the 100 year flood at incremental distances immediately downstream of the project (50 feet, 100 feet, etc)? Will this elevation change affect existing property owners by adding the corresponding land associated with downstream elevation changes? Will this project complete the Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) through FEMA to adjust the FIRM maps affected by the improved channel configuration?

#### Noise

There is the reality of a 5 decibel increase in highway noise due to the recommended project. Studies have indicated that the use of rubberized asphalt products can reduce the levels of noise on highway projects by 44% to 88% (refer to Asphalt Rubber Usage Guide-Caltrans 9-30-06), This would suggest that there could be an improvements to the existing and future noise conditions thus providing an environmentally superior alternative.

County of San Benito Board of Supervisors, page 3 of 3

Summary

As outlined above it is the conclusion of the Board of Supervisors that the Supplemental EIR of the proposed Highway 156 improvements is deficient and in need of revision and further consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Margie Barrios". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Margie" being more prominent than the last name "Barrios".

Margie Barrios  
Chair  
San Benito County Board of Supervisors



County of San Benito Resolution, page 1 of 2

Resolution No. 2006-109

RESOLUTION OF SAN BENITO COUNTY BOARD OF  
SUPERVISORS IDENTIFYING REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION  
PRIORITIES:

HIGHWAY 152  
HIGHWAY 156  
HIGHWAY 25

WHEREAS, San Benito County is geographically located as a major regional transportation corridor to facilitate truck and vehicular traffic to and from the San Joaquin Valley and beyond to the coastal regions of Northern California; and

WHEREAS, truck and vehicular traffic in, around and through San Benito County is increasing annually at an accelerated rate which threaten the health and safety of drivers and residents of the region while creating congestion and deterioration of efficient circulation systems; and

WHEREAS, the San Benito County Board of Supervisors is desirous of adopting a transportation strategy identifying the most important regional transportation projects to be pursued; and

WHEREAS, the San Benito County Board of Supervisors has identified three priority projects that will address the major current and future land transportation needs in the county and the region; and

WHEREAS, the San Benito County Board of Supervisors is confident that establishing regional transportation priorities for San Benito County and officially adopting this resolution identifying those priorities will provide support for developing these projects expeditiously and enhance the opportunities to secure financial support for these projects; and

WHEREAS, the San Benito County Board of Supervisors acknowledges that the identification of these transportation priorities will enhance interagency communications at the local, state and federal levels; and

WHEREAS, the San Benito County Board of Supervisors unanimously recognizes that the three projects identified in this resolution are the top regional transportation priorities for San Benito County; and

WHEREAS, the San Benito County Board of Supervisors is desirous of maintaining, to every extent possible, the rural and historic character of the county and to

## County of San Benito Resolution, page 2 of 2

secure the most environmentally compatible alternatives to these transportation projects while preserving prime agricultural land in the county; and

WHEREAS, the San Benito County Board of Supervisors acknowledges the fact that cooperation with both state and regional transportation regulatory agencies is critical to the success of designing and implementing safe and efficient traffic flow; and

WHEREAS, the San Benito County Board of Supervisors respectfully requests consideration by state and regional transportation regulatory agencies of measures to encourage interregional traffic flow along Highway 152 as the primary route between the San Joaquin Valley and beyond to the coastal regions of Northern California.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the San Benito County Board of Supervisors herein identifies the following three projects as the highest priority transportation projects for the county and the region by constructing four (4) lanes on:

- Highway 152
- Highway 156
- Highway 25

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the San Benito County Board of Supervisors, State of California, at the meeting of said Board held on the 24th day of October 2006 by the following vote:

AYES: SUPERVISORS: Monaco, De La Cruz, Botelho, Marcus, Loe  
NOES: SUPERVISORS: None  
ABSENT: SUPERVISORS: None

BY: PAT LOE  
PAT LOE, CHAIR  
San Benito County Board of Supervisors

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL FORM:  
Dennis LeClerc, County Counsel

ATTEST:  
Linda Churchill, Clerk of the Board

Dennis LeClerc, Deputy County Counsel

Linda Churchill



## **Response to County of San Benito Board of Supervisors**

1. Caltrans appreciates the comments submitted by San Benito County Board of Supervisors.
2. Caltrans notes the commitment expressed by the Board of Supervisors to maintain the rural and historic character of San Benito County and to secure the most environmentally compatible alternatives to transportation projects while preserving prime agricultural land in the county.
3. The Board of Supervisors questions the estimated 124 acres of farmland the project would convert. The board states that the environmental document should reflect the accurate acreage and not consider mitigation outside San Benito County. The board requests that the mitigation ratio be no less than 1 acre to 3 acres.

In regard to the estimated acreage of farmland conversion, the preliminary estimate for the total amount of right-of-way needed for the project is about 136.9 acres. However, the project limits include areas that are not considered farmland such as the area east of Union Road. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service Farmland Classification for post miles 3.0 to 7.25, State Route 156 is surrounded by “prime farmland *if irrigated*” except near Union Road. Based on preliminary designs for the project, Caltrans estimates 124 acres of converted farmland.

In regard to keeping mitigation within San Benito County, Caltrans would take the Board of Supervisors’ preference into consideration, but the development of conservation easements within San Benito County depends on the availability of the land, the willingness of the property owner, and the availability of the funds to acquire the easements, none of which Caltrans has the ultimate control over. Caltrans has already initiated efforts to establish conservation easements within San Benito County. Our efforts, however, have not been successful.

Caltrans must also take into consideration that farmland is a regional resource, and the loss of farmland resulting from the project represents an unavoidable permanent reduction in California’s agricultural land resources. With consideration for farmland being important to the San Juan Valley, San Benito County, and a regional resource, Caltrans intends to establish a nearby conservation easement. If, however, negotiations are not successful locally, Caltrans would establish a conservation easement elsewhere in California.

In regard to the mitigation ratio, the California Department of Conservation recommended the use of agricultural conservation easements on land of at least equal quality and size as partial compensation for the direct loss of agricultural land. An agricultural easement requires the property owner to limit future use of their land to agriculture in perpetuity (i.e., forever), which land owners may be reluctant to do.



4. In regard to the hydrology section of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, the Board of Supervisors ask three questions:

*(1) What is the change in water surface elevation of the 100-year flood at incremental distances immediately downstream of the project (50 feet, 100 feet, etc)?*

According to the 2010 Caltrans Hydrology Report, Appendix B of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, at 25 feet downstream from the San Juan Creek bridge, the 100-year water-surface elevation would be 0.37 feet lower than the existing elevation (existing elevation: 194.45 feet; proposed elevation: 194.08 feet). At 490 feet downstream from the San Juan Creek bridge, the 100-year water-surface elevation would be the same as the existing and proposed elevation of 190.87 feet). At 100 feet downstream from the San Juan Creek bridge, the 100-year water-surface elevation would be 0.31 feet lower than the existing elevation (existing elevation: 193.85 feet; proposed elevation: 193.54 feet).

*(2) Will this elevation change affect existing property owners by adding the corresponding land associated with downstream elevation changes?*

Caltrans anticipates the water-surface elevation will be decreased slightly, a minimal but positive change.

*(3) Will this project complete the Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to adjust the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) affected by the improved channel configuration?*

At this time, because the changes are positive, with few improvements, there are no current plans to complete a letter of map revision.

5. In regard to the use of rubberized asphalt products to reduce the levels of noise on highway projects, the reference to the September 9, 2006 Guide on Asphalt Rubber Usage was forwarded to the Caltrans Design branch for consideration. The full citation states:

Reduced traffic noise (primarily tire noise) is another important benefit of using asphalt rubber materials that has been documented in Europe (Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Netherlands), Canada, Arizona (Quiet Pavements Program), and California (Orange, Los Angeles and Sacramento Counties). Significant reductions in traffic noise, ranging from 40 to 88 percent, have been measured not only for open-graded but also for gap-graded rubberized asphalt concrete (RAC). However, there are unanswered questions about how long the noise abatement would continue. The Sacramento County Department of Environmental Review and Assessment and a consultant specializing in acoustics and noise control conducted a six-year study on RAC pavement that was finished in 1999. Their results supported the findings of the similar studies referenced within their report. The Sacramento study showed that the RAC continued to keep the graded traffic noise level down after six years, while noise





measured on the conventional dense graded hot mix asphalt (HMA) was back up to pre-paving levels within four years. California and Arizona are participating in a 10-year Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) project to study noise levels of a variety of pavements including rubberized asphalt concrete gap-graded (RAC-G), asphalt concrete open-graded (RAC-O), and asphalt concrete open-graded high binder (RAC-O-HB) (Asphalt Rubber Usage Guide, September 30, 2006, Section 1.9 Environmental Consideration, *1.9.1 Benefits, 1.9.1.3 Noise Abatement*

Caltrans hopes that the responses provided adequately address your concerns expressed for the four areas discussed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report. Thank you again for your input.

## Section 3.0 Individual Comments Submitted through US Postal Service and e-mail

Comments received from Jolene Cosio

San Benito 156 Improvement Project	
Public Hearing	
Wednesday, April 6, 2011	
COMMENT CARD	
NAME:	Jolene Cosio Vice Mayor SSB.
ADDRESS:	P.O. Box 521 CITY: San Juan Bautista ZIP: 95045
REPRESENTING:	
Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Please drop comments in the Comment Box or	
Mail to:	G. William "Trais" Norris III Senior Environmental Planner Department of Transportation 2015 East Shields Ave. Suite 100 Fresno, CA 93726-5428
<p>I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):</p> <p>refer p. 28- According to Section 15370 of CEQA "mitigation" includes (b) minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action &amp; implementation. I strongly disagree that is is what Alternative 6 will do. This is absolutely not what Alt. 6 will do. The best, most economical way to minimize the impacts to "Prime Farmland of Statewide Importance" is to widen the existing highway enough to allow room for a rumble strip down the center, wider shoulders and additional, longer turn lanes. No Four Lane controlled access expressway is necessary and not only will important farm land be saved, but impacts to all other sensitive environmental factors (endangered species, floods, noise) will be greatly reduced. A rumble strip, speeds no faster than 55 mph, and "no pass" zone along the length of the proposed site (from signal to signal) will make the highway far safer than a four lane expressway with a non-signalized intersection that crosses not only the new expressway, but also the existing 2-lane highway.</p> <p>Please respond by May 5, 2011</p>	
How Did You Hear About This Meeting? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> newsletter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> someone told me about it <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
 	

1



### **Response to Ms. Cosio**

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report was written to address the four subject areas listed in the Superior Court's order and not to reopen the alternative selection process. A preferred alternative was selected and approved for funding through construction.

1. You suggest minimizing farmland impacts by making the following improvements to the existing State Route 156: widen the existing roadway; add shoulders and rumble strips; add longer turn lanes; and include a no-pass zone and a 55 mile-per-hour speed limit.

In regard to widening the existing State Route 156, a high-pressure pipeline adjacent to the highway would require relocation. A roadway atop the pipeline would be unsafe. The relocation of that pipeline and other utilities such as PG&E and AT&T equipment, fiber optics, and drainage systems would require additional right-of-way. Unfortunately, new right-of-way would come from either the surrounding farmland or from the front yards of the residents living adjacent to the roadway.

Caltrans must consider the impacts of any project on the physical, biological, and human environment. Although widening the existing highway may help decrease farmland impacts, it would not solve the conflict between slower-moving traffic (trucks and farm equipment) with the regional and commuter traffic. Nor would widening improve safety for the residents and farmers entering and exiting their driveways.

# Comments received from Valerie J. Egland, page 1 of 1

The following comment card and two letters were included in the correspondence from Valerie J. Egland.

## San Benito 156 Improvement Project

### Public Hearing

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

### COMMENT CARD

NAME: VALERIE J. EGLAND

ADDRESS: 870 SCHOOL ROAD CITY: SAN JO. BTA. ZIP: 95045

REPRESENTING: SELF, OF LOCAL FAMILY SINCE 1912

Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? ☒ YES ☐ NO

Please drop comments in the Comment Box or

Mail to: G. William "Trai" Norris III  
Senior Environmental Planner  
Department of Transportation  
2015 East Shields Ave. Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):

ATTACHED, PLEASE FIND MY COMMENTS.



*Shanbyon, Valerie J. Egland*

How Did You Hear About This Meeting?

☐ newspaper ☐ newsletter ☒ someone told me about it ☐ other: email msg.

Please respond by May 5, 2011

vegland5@razzalink.com

000001.000001 Caltrans form 608



Letter #1 received from Valerie J. Egland, page 1 of 2

Comments concerning the Public Hearing of April 6, 2011

Addressed to the Senior Environmental Planner, Mr. G.W. Norris

Valerie J. Egland

870 School Road, San Juan Bautista, California 95045

Representing: Myself, Eclipse Art business owner, with a one hundred year family heritage on School Road, in San Juan Bautista area.

Responding to the Caltrans presentation of April 6, 2011, I believe the logical *environmental solution* for traffic from the south, and north, heading toward Interstate 5, would be *even distribution of traffic* throughout the area, *rather than a massive commute* path degrading our precious California ambiance. In that light, traffic from the north should be channeled to Hwy 152, and Hwy 25. Traffic from the south should be channeled to Hwy 156, Hwy 152 and Hwy 25. Hwy 156 would naturally need to be 'safety upgraded' with a center rumble strip and turnout safety lanes to enter and exit side roads. *The key is preservation of agricultural land as well as California lifestyle as we wish to keep it for future generations.*

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Consider that trucks are restricted to a 55 mile an hour speed limit, and fuel efficiency is at a peak with that speed limit as well. It bodes well for Caltrans to encourage SLOW ROADS.

In the case of noise abatement, such a poor job was done for the neighborhoods impacted by the 156 San Juan Bypass, the judgments put forth in the Draft Supplement cannot be trusted. Caltrans has not paid attention to its obligation to protect the environment in San Juan Bautista, thus reducing property values in the neighborhoods bordering Hwy 156. To sit in the living rooms of these neighboring homes is like being in a war zone.

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Prior to the Hwy 156 bypass of San Juan Bautista and its route off of Hwy 101, the San Juan Lateral was the town's best advertisement. The Lateral has an adobe structure reminiscent of the historic Mission San Juan Bautista. Now it is unkempt and not seen until potential visitors pass under the flyover. San Juan has lost many visitor revenue opportunities because of this. Appropriate signage for the State Park, Historic San Juan Bautista, and Mission San Juan Bautista needs to be included with any further project associated with this town.

Driving North on Hwy 101, there needs to be a sign one mile before the Hwy 156 exit that says HISTORIC SAN JUAN BAUTISTA NEXT TWO EXITS, and after that exit, another sign that says HISTORIC SAN JUAN BAUTISTA NEXT EXIT. That exit should indicate that it is for both Hwy 129 West and San Juan Hwy East.

Driving South from Gilroy, there needs to be a sign one mile before the Hwy 129 and San Juan Hwy exit, indicating HISTORIC SAN JUAN BAUTISTA NEXT TWO EXITS,

Letter #1 received from Valerie J. Egland, page 2 of 2

along with Watsonville, Hwy 129. This "back door" into San Juan gives the visitor a good look at the agricultural industry that surrounds us.

The aforementioned improvements would be more environmentally friendly choices for the Route 156 Project, but in case of our loss of voice, and/or limited choice, consider channeling current north side residences' traffic to Olympia Road. Offer to relocate their homes on their properties to relieve the impact. Make the current two lanes of Hwy 156 into one half of the FOUR lane project, not six or eight. The four lane project would still need safety turnouts, center barrier and rumble strips on the sides, and a reduced speed limit as through the Prunedale area.

Not only do the citizens of San Benito County deserve a better plan, but all travelers in the world who come to see our Golden State of California.

Valerie J. Egland  
vegland5@razzolink.com  
April 18, 2011



Letter #2 received from Valerie J. Egland, page 1 of 1

Comments concerning the Public Hearing of April 6, 2011

Addressed to the Senior Environmental Planner, Mr. G.W. Norris

Valerie J. Egland

870 School Road, San Juan Bautista, California 95045

Representing: Myself, Eclipse Art business owner, with a one hundred year family heritage on School Road, in San Juan Bautista area.

Responding to the Caltrans presentation of April 6, 2011, I believe the logical *environmental solution* for traffic from the south, and north, heading toward Interstate 5, would be *even distribution of traffic* throughout the area, *rather than a massive commute* path degrading our precious California ambiance. In that light, traffic from the north should be channeled to Hwy 152, and Hwy 25. Traffic from the south should be channeled to Hwy 156, Hwy 152 and Hwy 25. Hwy 156 would naturally need to be 'safety upgraded' with a center rumble strip and turnout safety lanes to enter and exit side roads. The key is preservation of agricultural land as well as California lifestyle as we wish to keep it for future generations.

Consider that trucks are restricted to a 55 mile an hour speed limit, and fuel efficiency is at a peak with that speed limit as well. It bodes well for Caltrans to encourage SLOW ROADS.

Prior to the Hwy 156 bypass of San Juan Bautista and its route off of Hwy 101, the San Juan Lateral was the town's best advertisement. The Lateral has an adobe structure reminiscent of the historic Mission San Juan Bautista. Now it is unkempt and not seen until potential visitors pass under the flyover. San Juan has lost many visitor revenue opportunities because of this. Appropriate signage for the State Park, Historic San Juan Bautista, and Mission San Juan Bautista needs to be included with any further project associated with this town.

Driving North on Hwy 101, there needs to be a sign one mile before the Hwy 156 exit that says HISTORIC SAN JUAN BAUTISTA NEXT TWO EXITS, and after that exit, another sign that says HISTORIC SAN JUAN BAUTISTA NEXT EXIT. That exit should indicate that it is for both Hwy 129 West and San Juan Hwy East.

Driving South from Gilroy, there needs to be a sign one mile before the Hwy 129 and San Juan Hwy exit, indicating HISTORIC SAN JUAN BAUTISTA NEXT TWO EXITS, along with Watsonville, Hwy 129. This "back door" into San Juan gives the visitor a good look at the agricultural industry that surrounds us.

The aforementioned improvements would be environmentally friendly, but in case of our loss of voice, and/or limited choice, in this matter, consider channeling current north side residences' traffic to Olympia Road, and offer to relocate their homes on their properties to relieve the impact. Make the current two lanes of Hwy 156 into one half of the FOUR lane project, not six or eight. The four lane project would still need safety turnouts, center barrier and rumble strips on the sides, and a reduced speed limit as through the Prunedale area.

Not only do the citizens in this area deserve a better plan, but all in the world who come to see our Golden State of California.

*Valerie J. Egland*  
*April 17, 2011*

### **Response to Ms. Egland**

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report was written to address the four subject areas listed in the Superior Court's order and not to reopen the alternative selection process. A preferred alternative was selected and approved for funding through construction.

1. You suggest minimizing the farmland impacts by distributing traffic to State Routes 152 and 25 while making improvements to the existing State Route 156. You suggest upgrading the safety of the existing State Route 156 by adding rumble strips, turn lanes, and a 55 miles-per-hour speed limit. You state, "*The key is preservation of agricultural land as well as California lifestyle as we wish to keep it for future generations.*"

Regarding the distribution of traffic to State Routes 152 and 25, Caltrans circulated a Draft Environmental Impact Report with a Tier I Draft Environmental Impact Statement for State Route 25 in spring 2010. In addition, a System Analysis Study, which focused on State Routes 101, 152, and 156 was conducted to investigate potential investment in the roadway system design to improve east-to-west travel through the region. Preliminary studies show that commuters heavily travel State Route 156 east and west from Hollister, while State Route 25 offers a more northern route. Proposed improvements to State Route 25 would eventually shift traffic from State Route 156 to other routes. At this time, however, the San Benito 156 Improvement Project has been approved and funded by the Council of San Benito County Governments through its construction, and the safety concerns for this segment on State Route 156 cannot be ignored.

In regard to preserving agricultural resources or farmland, State Routes 25, 152, and 156 are surrounded by farmland of various qualities. Inevitably, any improvement to any one of these routes would have a substantial unavoidable impact to farmland.

The improvements you suggest to the existing State Route 156 would inevitably require additional right-of-way to widen the roadway and relocate utilities such as PG&E and AT&T equipment, fiber optics, and drainage systems. A high-pressure gas pipeline adjacent to the highway would also require relocation. A roadway atop the pipeline would be unsafe. In addition, new right-of-way would come from either the surrounding farmland or from the front yards of the residents living adjacent to the roadway.





Caltrans must consider the impacts of any project on the physical, biological, and human environment. Although, widening the existing highway may decrease the acreage of converted farmland, widening would not solve the conflict between slower-moving traffic (trucks and farm equipment) with the regional and commuter traffic. Nor would widening improve safety for the residents and farmers entering and exiting their driveways.

2. In regard to the trustworthiness of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report noise section, the judgment required Caltrans to provide the necessary information to specify noise impact standards. Also, Caltrans would show that the standards used for the project are consistent with those applied statewide. The noise standards are not intended to be an analysis.

In regard to the noise abatement and signage issues in the city of San Juan Bautista, your concerns have been forwarded to the Caltrans District 5 project manager and Caltrans District 5 public information office. Caltrans hopes that the responses provided above adequately address your concerns expressed for the four areas discussed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report. Thank you again for your input.

## Comments received from John E. Goff, page 1 of 1

The following two comment cards were included in the correspondence from John E. Goff.

<h2 style="text-align: center;">San Benito 156 Improvement Project</h2>	
<h3 style="text-align: center;">Public Hearing</h3>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday, April 6, 2011</p>	
<h3 style="text-align: center;">COMMENT CARD</h3>	
NAME:	<u>John E Goff</u>
ADDRESS:	<u>430 YRETA'S RD</u> CITY: <u>HILLISTER</u> ZIP: <u>95023</u>
REPRESENTING:	<u>SELF</u>
Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Please drop comments in the Comment Box or	
Mail to:	G. William "Trais" Norris III Senior Environmental Planner Department of Transportation 2015 East Shields Ave. Suite 100 Fresno, CA 93726-5428
I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):	
<p> <u>I WAS TOLD THE SAN JUAN CREEK BRIDGE WOULD BE WIDER TO</u>  <u>TAKE CARE OF FLOODING, DUE TO THE NEW ROAD CHANGES. PART OF</u>  <u>YOUR MITIGATION MEASURES. BECAUSE OF PAST FLOODING IN THAT AREA,</u>  <u>MY CONSIDERATION IS THE AREA PAST THE BRIDGE. THE COUNTY</u>  <u>SHOULD NOT HAVE TO PAY FOR ANY WIDENING BECAUSE OF A</u>  <u>BOTTLE NECK TO WATER FLOW CAUSED BY ROAD CHANGE.</u>  <u>YOUR MITIGATION MEASURES - PAGE 17 DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL EIR -</u>  <u>PARAGRAPH 2 - FIRST ALTERNATIVE, SHOULD BE GIVEN</u>  <u>CONSIDERATION, FOR SAFETY OF THOSE PEOPLE LIVING IN</u>  <u>THE AREA.</u> </p>	
<p style="text-align: right;">THANK YOU (EAST ENHANCEMENT - NOT FINANCIAL S.E.C. 4.150A IS ENOUGH FEET)</p>	
Please respond by <b>May 5, 2011</b>	
How Did You Hear About This Meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/> newspaper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> newsletter <input type="checkbox"/> someone told me about it <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;">   </div>	



## Comments received from John E. Goff, page 1 of 1

## San Benito 156 Improvement Project

## Public Hearing

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

## COMMENT CARD

NAME: John E GoffADDRESS: 430 FREITAS RD CITY: HOLLISTER ZIP: CA 95023REPRESENTING: SELF

Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list?

☒ YES ☐ NO

Please drop comments in the Comment Box or

Mail to: G. William "Trais" Norris III  
 Senior Environmental Planner  
 Department of Transportation  
 2015 East Shields Ave. Suite 100  
 Fresno, CA 93726-5428

I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print): (BETTER)

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE 156 UNION ROAD INTERSECTION? AS IT STANDS  
YOU ARE NOT LOOKING AT THE FUTURE VOLUME OF TRAFFIC AND SAFETY AT THIS  
INTERSECTION CLOSE ENOUGH! DO IT RIGHT, IF IT MEANS PUTTING IN AN OVER  
PASS, OR MOVING THE LIGHTS SO YOU CAN GET A BETTER FLOW OF TRAFFIC.  
CAN A RIGHT TURN OFF OF 156 BEFORE THE STOP LIGHT, ON TO MITCHEL BE MADE  
WITH A YIELD, FOR BETTER TRAFFIC FLOW. LOOK AT THE RIGHT TURN OFF  
156 COMING FROM SAN JUAN, MAKE A SMOOTH TURN ON TO UNION ROAD  
WITH A YIELD TO UNION TRAFFIC. WE HAVE MORE VOLUME OF TRAFFIC  
FROM COUNTRY CLUB AND GOLF COURSE AND OT ROAD PARK, AT PEAK TIMES IT WILL  
ONLY GET WORSE, I HOPE YOU CAN FIND THE ANSWER?

Please respond by May 5, 2011

How Did You Hear  
About This Meeting?☒ newspaper☒ newsletter☐ someone  
told me  
about it☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

04/06/2011 10:00 AM

### **Response to Mr. Goff**

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report was written to address the four subject areas listed in the Superior Court's order and not to reopen the alternative selection process. A preferred alternative was selected and approved for funding through construction.

1. You state that you were told the San Juan Creek bridge would be wider to take care of flooding and you want to know whether Caltrans took into consideration flooding downstream. You also express concern that changes in the roadway could create a bottleneck for water flow. You are also concerned about the financial responsibility should the highway project result in such a condition.

In regard to the widening of the San Juan Creek bridge, Caltrans does not propose widening the existing bridge but proposes a longer bridge than the existing bridge for the new eastbound lanes.

In regard to flooding downstream, Caltrans proposes widening this segment of the San Juan Creek channel 10 feet from Mission Vineyard to the San Juan Creek bridge. The proposed channel widening, it is anticipated, would decrease the surface-water elevation downstream in a 100-year flow. Please refer to Appendix B of this environmental document for the 2010 Caltrans Hydrology and Floodplain Report, Section IV D, *San Juan Creek Water Surface Elevations*, page 10.

In regard to the concern for bottlenecking and the financial responsibility in case this condition should occur, Caltrans does not anticipate any blockage or backup to occur with the proposals for modifying the creek channel.

2. Your recommendation for the first alternative, widening the San Juan Creek channel an additional 10 feet, is noted.
3. You appear to express that modifying 1,500 feet of the east branch of the San Juan Creek is not enough. Although Caltrans has taken the public's expressed concerns under consideration in designing the proposed improvements to the San Juan Creek, the San Benito 156 Improvement Project cannot fully address all the area's flooding issues. Caltrans has determined that modifying only 1,500 feet of the creek channel is adequate to address the purpose and need of the project, highway flooding, and to avoid encroaching on the floodplain.



## Comments received from Pamala G. Milia, page 1 of 1



<Pamalamilia@aol.com>

04/26/2011 11:44 AM

To <trais\_norris@dot.ca.gov>

cc

Subject Sn Benito County Route 156 Project Comments

Dear Sirs:

I was born and raised in San Juan Bautista, and my Dad still lives there, so I have a vested interest in what happens in our community and the San Juan Valley.

I have a simple solution to your plans. Do not widen 156 through San Juan Valley. Instead what you need to do is:

1. LOWER the speed limit ~ this will save lives, as the CHP has documented on many occasions, lowering the speed limit always saves lives.
2. Install a double yellow line with bumps in center on Hwy 156 and leave the two lanes - this will SAVE MONEY, make the San Juan Community happy, and make community members feel that Cal Trans is responsive to the needs and wishes of our local tax payers.
3. Instead of wasting money widening 156 which NO ONE in the San Juan Valley wishes, spend our tax payer dollars on 2 new and improved signs at both north and south existing exits to San Juan Bautista, a total of 4 new signs. We need 4 new signs which will more clearly mark our historic town, and Mission San Juan Bautista, for potential tourists to visit our town.
4. Lowering the speed limit and keeping the 2 lanes is environmentally correct. It will lower fuel pollution with lower speed limit, lower noise pollution, and eliminate desecrating our San Juan Valley. We like our rural, agricultural, San Juan Valley the way it is. Leave it alone and you can be heroes to our community, the Governor will be thrilled that Cal Trans is saving tax payer dollars, and the environmentalists will be happy you are not ruining our rural agricultural land.

Your truly,  
Pamala G. Milia

***Response to Ms. Milia***

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project and your suggestion for lowering the speed limit, installing double yellow lines, rumble strips (bumps in center?), and providing better signage for San Juan Bautista. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project

The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report was written to address the four subject areas listed in the Superior Court's order and not to reopen the alternative selection process. A preferred alternative was selected and approved for funding through construction.



## Comments received from Steve and Beverly Miller, page 1 of 1

**San Benito 156 Improvement Project**

**Public Hearing**  
Wednesday, April 6, 2011

**COMMENT CARD**

NAME: Steve + Beverly Miller

ADDRESS: 3315 Celina Linda CITY: Hollister ZIP: 95023

REPRESENTING: ourselves

Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list?  
Please drop comments in the Comment Box or

Mail to: G. William "Trais" Norris III  
Senior Environmental Planner  
Department of Transportation  
2015 East Shields Ave. Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

☐ YES ☐ NO  
☒ already on

I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):



We believe the SB156 "Improvement" Project is an unnecessary expenditure of taxpayer dollars. The project complexity + size is much greater than needed for the size of the area population, current road length + size. It does not seem reasonable to change 6 miles of highway to a freeway with this extent of improvement. A great example of "scope creep".

We recommend that no further dollars be spent until the project is downsized to a more realistic project, or is abandoned altogether.

Thank You, Steve + Bev Miller

Please respond by May 5, 2011

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? ☐ newspaper ☐ newsletter ☐ someone told me about it ☐ other: mailing

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***Response to Mr. and Ms. Miller***

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project. However, at this time, the San Benito 156 Improvement Project has been approved and funded by the Council of San Benito County Governments through its construction.

The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contained only the information necessary to address the court's order. Comments submitted were to address only those four areas discussed in the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report; therefore, Caltrans responded to only those comments addressing the four areas discussed. Thank you again for your input.



## Comments received from Ted Thoeny, PE, Letter #1, page 1 of 2

The following two letters were included in the correspondence received from Ted Thoeny.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

THE FOLLOWING ARE MY CONCERNS REGARDING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AS A RESULT OF THE PROPOSED HWY 156 IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH THE SAN JUAN VALLEY BY CAL TRANS DISTRICT 5.

THE DOCUMENT ISSUED DOES NOT ADEQUATELY SHOW THE PUBLIC, THE PROPOSED CROSS SECTIONS OF THE HIGHWAY ALONG THE ROUTE TO BE CONSTRUCTED, INCLUDING ELEVATIONS OF THE NEW ROADWAY IN RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING HIGHWAY GRADES AND ADJACENT PRIVATE PROPERTIES; NOR DOES IT SHOW ELEVATION DIFFERENCES FOR THE DEPTHS AND CROSS SECTIONS OF LONGITUDINAL DRAINAGE DITCHES.

UNFORTUNATELY, ACCIDENTS OF VEHICLES LEAVING THE ROADWAYS WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE DANGEROUS DUE TO HIGHER SPEEDS INDUCED BY MULTILANE TRAFFIC AND INCREASED ELEVATION DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ROADWAYS AND THE ADJOINING DITCHES.

MORE SEVERE ACCIDENTS WILL OCCUR AT SIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS DUE TO THE HIGHER ANTICIPATED SPEEDS

AN ADDITIONAL SIGNAL WILL NEED TO BE ADDED AT THE INTERSECTION OF HWY 156 AND BIXBY ROAD, INCREASING THE NUMBER OF SEVERE ACCIDENTS.

THERE WILL BE INCREASED CONGESTION AT THE INTERSECTION OF HWY 156 AND UNION ROAD BECAUSE OF DESIGN FLAWS IN THE GEOMETRICS OF THE TURNING MOVEMENTS.

HIGHWAY NOISE WILL INCREASE THROUGHOUT THE SAN JUAN VALLEY DUE TO THE INCREASED ELEVATION OF THE ROADWAYS.

MOTORCYCLES AND JAKE BRAKES CAN ALREADY BE HEARD THROUGH OUT THE SAN JUAN VALLEY FOR MILES.

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Letter #1 received from Ted Thoeny, PE, page 2 of 2

COMPACTION OF THE SUB-GRADE FOR THE RIGHT OF WAY WILL EXASPERATE HIGH GROUNDWATER DRAINAGE DURING WET YEARS SUCH AS 1995 AND 1998, WHEN THE WATER TABLE WAS ONLY A COUPLE FEET BELOW THE GROUND SURFACE, CAUSING SEVERE DAMAGE TO CROPS.  
SEPTIC TANKS NOW HAVE TO BUILT ABOVE GROUND.

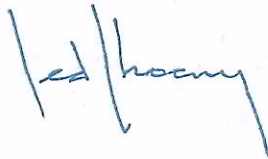
AIR POLLUTION WILL BECOME MORE PRONOUNCED, INCLUDING CONTAMINATION OF THE GROUNDWATER BY HEAVY METALS. THE PINNACLES NATIONAL MONUMENT ALREADY HAS SIGNIFICANT AND DANGEROUS LEVELS OF AIR POLLUTION ACCUMULATING FROM VEHICLE EXHAUST GENERATED BY VEHICLES IN NORTH SAN BENITO COUNTY.

THERE IS STILL THE SEVERE CHANCE THAT THE SAN JUSTO EARTHEN DAM WILL COLLAPSE IN A MAJOR EARTHQUAKE, AS THE SAN ANDREAS FAULT CROSSES HWY 156 NEARBY IN SAN JUAN BAUTISTA

RECOMMEND THIS PROJECT NOT BE BUILT IN SAN BENITO COUNTY, BUT FUNDS BE UTILIZED TO COMPLETE THE IMPROVEMENT, CONNECTION AND COMPLETION OF HWY 152 TO U.S. 101 IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY BY CAL TRANS DISTRICT 4.

SINCERELY,

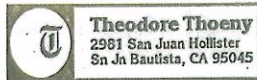
TED THOENY P.E.  
APRIL 15, 2011

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ted Thoeny', is written over the typed name and date.

P.S. PARTICULARLY TROUBLING IS THAT THERE IS NO INDICATION ON THE SECTIONS OF THE PLAN VIEW FOR ROUTE 156, WHERE PROPERTY LINES ARE LOCATED, AND OTHER ESSENTIAL ITEMS, SUCH AS DRIVEWAYS AND NAMES OF PROPERTY OWNERS SO THAT THE READER HAS SOME IDEA OF THE BASIC IMPACT ON THEIR FUTURE WELL BEING.



Letter #2 received from Ted Thoeny, PE, page 1 of 1



APRIL 18, 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

THAT PORTION OF HWY 156 BETWEEN CAGNEY/MISSION VINEYARD ROADS ON THE WEST AND MITCHELL/UNION ROADS ON THE EAST IS 4 MILES AND IS FARMED BY THE SAME AGRICULTURAL COMPANIES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE HIGHWAY.

THEY MOVE EQUIPMENT, PERSONNEL, SPRINKLERS AND SUPPLIES BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THE HIGHWAY ON A DAILY BASIS.

BUILDING THE EXPRESSWAY/FREEWAY AS PROPOSED WILL JEOPARDIZE EFFICIENT FARMING PRACTICES IN THE SAN JUAN VALLEY FOREVER.

YOU MAY ALSO WANT TO NOTE THAT THIS 4 MILE SECTION OF HWY IS NOW THE ONLY PORTION OF HWY 156 FROM U.S. 101 ON THE SOUTH TO HWY 152 ON THE NORTH THAT IS NOT SO ENCUMBERED.

MEANING THAT IN THE FUTURE, CAL TRANS WILL BE ABLE TO BUILD ALONG THE ENTIRE 17 MILES IN SAN BENITO COUNTY ANYTHING THEY WANT TO BUILD, AS THE RIGHT OF WAY WILL BE SO DESIGNATED AND RESTRICTED.

IN ADDITION, CAL TRAN'S POLICY IS TO PREVENT FLOODING OF THEIR HIGHWAYS AT ALL COST, UP TO AND INCLUDING A 1000 YEAR STORM. THE CROSSING OF HWY 156 AT TEQUISQUITA SLOUGH NOW CAUSES FLOODING OF THE HOMES NEXT TO THE HIGHWAY, ONE OF THOSE IS THE LANINI DAIRY FARM. THEY NEVER FLOODED BEFORE THE NEW HIGHWAY 156 WAS BUILT, BUT THEY DO NOW, SINCE CAL TRANS BUILT THE NEW ROADWAY 10 FEET ABOVE THE ORIGINAL GROUND.

THE HWY 156 CORRIDOR THROUGH SAN BENITO COUNTY SHOULD NEVER PERMIT THE PASSAGE OF TRUCKS AS HAS BEEN DESIGNATED ON STATE HWY 85 AND HWY 280 IN SANTA CLARA AND SAN MATEO COUNTY. KEEP ALL FUTURE TRUCK TRAFFIC ON U.S. 101 AND STATE ROUTE 152. THANK YOU

Handwritten signature of Ted Thoeny in green ink.

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### **Response to Mr. Thoeny, PE**

Thank you for your comments and interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project and your comments regarding safety, congestion, drainage, air pollution, earthquake damage, alternate route improvements, and inadequate mapping. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project. However, the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contained only the information necessary to address the court's order. Comments submitted were to address only those four areas discussed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report; therefore, Caltrans responded to only those comments addressing the four areas discussed.

1. In your first letter, you state that the Draft Supplement Environmental Impact Report does not adequately show the public the following proposed cross sections of the highway along the route to be constructed: elevations for the new roadway in relationship to existing highway grades and adjacent private properties; the elevation difference for the depths and cross sections of longitudinal drainage ditches.

Caltrans provided typical cross sections of the three proposed alternatives, four cross sections of the preferred alternative, and cross sections of the proposed soundwall in the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact. All of these cross sections displayed elevations for the new roadway in relationship to existing highway grades and adjacent private properties. The cross sections also showed the elevation difference for the depths and cross sections of the longitudinal drainage ditches, although they were not specific to a property parcel. In addition, the 2010 Caltrans Hydrology and Floodplain Report includes a cross section and the preliminary drainage plans for the proposed project.

2. You express a concern that highway noise will increase throughout the San Juan Valley due to the increased elevation of the roadways. You state that motorcycles and "Jake" brakes (from trucks) can already be heard throughout the San Juan Valley for miles.

The highway is expected to be raised less than five feet and the roadway would not necessarily be raised throughout the project limits.

Caltrans' 2007 Noise Study conducted for the project describes the existing noise environment as "dominated by traffic on State Route 156." Because of the relatively flat terrain, the variation in noise level is largely dependent on the distance of the receptor from the highway. Noise from a line source like a



highway attenuates at the rate of 4.5 decibels per distance doubled over a soft site (like agricultural fields) and at 3 decibels over hard sites like parking lots.

At the time, current peak hour traffic noise levels in the project area ranged from 65 decibels to 73 decibels. In comparison, typical noise levels from common outdoor activities ranges from heavy traffic 300 feet away from the listener (60-plus decibels) to a gas lawn mower 100 feet away from the listener (70-plus decibels). Comparative common indoor activities range from normal speech 3 feet from the listener (60-plus decibels) to a vacuum cleaner 10 feet away from the listener (70-plus decibels).

Caltrans' objective in the noise studies conducted for highway projects is to minimize impacts on receptors within about 300 feet of the roadway, where the most severe noise impacts occur, and where soundwalls may be effective because soundwalls are the main method that Caltrans has to minimize traffic-noise impacts.

3. In your second letter, you express a concern that the expressway/freeway as proposed will jeopardize efficient farming practices in the San Juan Valley forever. Caltrans has made a good faith effort to be informed about the needs and wishes of the farming community by meeting with the farmers directly affected by the highway project.
4. You state Caltrans' policy is to prevent flooding of their highways at all cost, up to and including a 1000-year storm, and say the Tesquisquita Slough now causes flooding of the homes next to the highway since Caltrans built the new roadway 10 feet above the ground.

In regard to state highway flooding, Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) directs all federal agencies to refrain from conducting, supporting, or allowing actions in floodplains unless it is the only practicable alternative. Requirements for compliance are outlined in 23 Code of Federal Regulations Part 650 Subpart A.

Subpart A prescribes policies and procedures for the location and hydraulic design of highway encroachments on floodplains. Such policies comply with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA has adapted the 100-year flood as the base flood for floodplain management purposes. The 100-year flood or base flood is defined as the "flood or tide having a one percent chance of being exceeded in any given year."

The concern you express about the Tesquisquita Slough causing flooding due to the raised profile of the state highway has been forwarded for consideration to the Caltrans District 5 project manager.



## Section 4.0 Comment Cards from the Public Hearing

### Comment from Cathy Alameda, page 1 of 2

The following comment card and attachment were included in the correspondence from Cathy Alameda.

# San Benito 156 Improvement Project

## Public Hearing

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

### COMMENT CARD

NAME: Cathy Alameda

ADDRESS: 175 Flint CITY: STB ZIP: 95045

REPRESENTING: Parent / citizen

Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? ☒ YES ☐ NO

Please drop comments in the Comment Box or

Mail to: G. William "Trais" Norris III  
Senior Environmental Planner  
Department of Transportation  
2015 East Shields Ave. Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):

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Please respond by May 5, 2011

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? ☐ newspaper ☐ newsletter ☐ someone told me about it ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Comment from Cathy Alameda, page 2 of 2

Good Afternoon,

My name is Cathy Alameda I am currently the school board president for the Arroyo San Juan school district, with which this school is a member of. I am also a business owner with my husband in a farming venture in the San Juan Valley, Salinas and Yuma areas and personal use Hwy 156 several times a day.

President of the Board of Education  
for the A/SJUSD.

Thank you with providing the community the opportunity to voice our concerns and questions in regards to the plans that Caltrans is so intent on pursuing.

With Caltrans' Lack of Transparency

I am disappointed that the very school with which this public forum is being held was not informed of this event. I feel that in the very least that a letter should have gone out to all parents within this school district from Caltrans explaining and inviting them to this meeting.

As a school board trustee the safety of the district children is very important to me and the expansion of Hwy 156 is extremely concerning. With possible accidents involving chemicals, fuel or other hazardous material and with the potential of more vehicles on Hwy 156, I question the safety of the possible expansion of Hwy 156 to the community and its children and citizens.

As a businessperson with a farming interest in the San Juan Valley. I can appreciate the decision that Caltrans has made to widen the Hwy 156. I agree that the Hwy does need improvements. But not to the extent or expansion that is being promoted by Caltrans. With the current plan as proposed by Caltrans it would be cost prohibitive to farm on both sides, south and north of the Hwy. The ability to safely move equipment, irrigation water, employees, and supplies would be virtually impossible. The total amount of income, salaries, jobs, taxes that would be lost due to this expansion, during these uncertain financial times would be crippling to this community.

I do believe that there is a solution to this problem. Giving Caltrans the ability to use the taxpayers money wisely. This solution would be to widen Hwy 156 by adding an adequate shoulder and a center divide, adequate drainage and prohibiting non local semi trucks. Thereby moving the remainder of the funds to Hwy 25 and creating Hwy 25 as the expressway from Hwy 5 to Hwy 101. In doing so it would help preserve the business endeavors and the open space of the San Juan Valley and also create a business hub along Hwy 25 and the Hollister community. Which in turn would create tax revenue for the local and state economies.

Caltrans behavior during this whole process has been one likened to a school yard bully. I have found that the only way a bully can be dealt with is if all the bullied parties stand together and say no more and be vocal and to tell everyone that has the power to help stop it. I encourage the community to take a stand and be heard. There is strength and truth in numbers.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

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### **Response to Ms. Alameda**

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contained only the information necessary to address the court's order. Comments submitted were to address only those four areas discussed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report. However, you expressed a concern for safety and Caltrans hopes that the following responses adequately address the four areas discussed in the supplemental environmental document and the concern for safety.

1. Caltrans appreciates your acknowledgment and gratitude for public comment.
2. You express disappointment in Caltrans for the lack of notice to all parents of school children within the school district because safety is a concern.

The public meeting was advertised twice in the local newspapers prior to the meeting date and notice of the public hearing was mailed to the school districts, schools, and school transportation departments in the area.

Safety is a priority for Caltrans and all efforts are made to maintain the safety of State Route 156 for all users. The project would eliminate the conflict between slower- and faster-moving traffic; provide wider shoulders; and separate on-coming traffic with a median. With an improved highway, one would expect fewer accidents to occur. In addition, the frontage roads would provide a safer bus route because faster-moving commuter traffic and most of the regional truck traffic would be eliminated.

3. Caltrans has made a good faith effort to be informed about the needs and wishes of the farming community by meeting with the farmers directly affected by the highway project.
4. The improvements you suggest to the existing State Route 156 would inevitably require additional right-of-way to widen the roadway, relocate utilities, and improve drainage. An underground high-pressure pipeline lies near the roadway and road building on top of the pipeline would be unsafe. Also, acquiring new right-of-way would be needed from either farmland or the residents living adjacent to the roadway.

Thank you again for your input.

# Comment from Richard Morris, page 1 of 1

The following comment card and attachment were included in the correspondence from Richard Morris.

## San Benito 156 Improvement Project

### Public Hearing

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

### COMMENT CARD

NAME: Richard Morris - Anne B. Morris

ADDRESS: 77 Bay 1300 CITY: San Jose ZIP: 95045

REPRESENTING: Self, Family, Baumgardner Bauer

Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? ☒ YES ☐ NO

Please drop comments in the Comment Box or



Mail to: G. William "Trais" Norris III  
 Senior Environmental Planner  
 Department of Transportation  
 2015 East Shields Ave. Suite 100  
 Fresno, CA 93726-5428

I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):

Richard Morris

**Please respond by May 5, 2011**

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? ☐ newspaper ☐ newsletter ☐ someone told me about it ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

0007 0010 Caltrans



## Comment from Richard Morris, page 1 of 1

Comments for the CalTrans Supplemental EIR Hearing, 4/6/11

*The loss of Farmland from the project is "an unavoidable permanent reduction in California's agricultural land."*

So ends the Supplemental EIR. The report also says that this is *prime farmland*. Why would California throw away its *prime farmland*, especially when it can't balance its budget without destroying its educational resources, including teachers?

In a recent, separate letter in response to my letter last November to Governor Brown raising this issue—loss of farmland—and other issues discussed in the Supplemental EIR, Mr. Richard Krumholz, Director of Cal Trans District 5, admits that Cal Trans—District Four is now preparing another Environmental Review to expand Highway 25 and Highway 156, where they connect, for 4-lanes from Highway 101 to Highway 152 and on to I-5.

This proposal is expected to cost 300 million dollars. Director Krumholz says that we need both. He believes, apparently, that we have more than enough prime farmland, and we no longer need good education for California's students.

Now we all recognize that we would like to have a safe and efficient route between 101 and I-5 for both trucks and commuters. But do we need two new and expensive roads for this purpose? No. Do we have to destroy our farmland and our children's education for this purpose? No! That is just too big a price. So here we part company with Mr. Krumholz. His world is not the same world which we must live in. Our world has only so much money.

So what do we do? First, we do nothing. Everybody in California knows that well before Governor Schwarzenegger arrived in Sacramento to right all of our State's wrongs, the State's expenses were beyond its Prop 13's revenues. That limit was imposed in 1975.

Second, we complete the EIR for the Highway 25 alternative. Alternatives are one of the primary factors in considering environmental impact. Why they were not proposed in this instance, I have no idea. We know that loss of prime farmland is not an issue for the Highway 25 alternative. And its \$300 million price tag, reduced by the savings from eliminating the Highway 156 expansion, becomes more reasonable. Furthermore, moving the trucks from 156 to Highway 25 removes a devastating threat to the peace and welfare of San Juan Bautista, and to its productive San Juan Valley. No elevated road will "dike" rainwater for flooding.

And there is more: the Highway 25 alternative has valuable and unique benefits to San Benito County taxpayers. First, it means that the County doesn't have to come up with "matching funds" for two highway expansions. Second, it will not be stuck with an already toxic-plagued State Highway 156 as a "new" County road—only to be faced with the monumental cost of eliminating its environmental hazards.

Thank you.

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### **Response to Mr. Morris**

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contained only the information necessary to address the court's order. Comments submitted were to address only those four areas.

1. In regard to your concerns about loss of farmland, Caltrans' policy is to avoid or minimize farmland impacts to the maximum extent possible. However, this segment of State Route 156 is surrounded by farmland, which makes the avoidance of farmland impacts impossible. The loss of farmland represents an unavoidable permanent reduction in California's agricultural land resources. Caltrans intends to establish a conservation easement to mitigate this loss and believes the use of a conservation easement, along with the mitigation measures already built into the project design, would partially compensate the direct loss of agricultural land and would protect a portion of California's remaining farmland.
2. You suggest completing the State Route 25 environmental process because the loss of prime farmland is not an issue.

In regard to State Route 25, Caltrans circulated a Draft Environmental Impact Report with a Tier I Draft Environmental Impact Statement for State Route 25 in spring 2010. State Route 25 is surrounded by farmland of various qualities and during the circulation of the draft environmental document the public expressed concern for the loss of their farmland. As a result of the public comment received, Caltrans has modified the proposed preferred alternative and considerably reduced the amount of converted farmland.

In addition, a System Analysis Study that focused on State Routes 101, 152, and 156 was conducted to investigate potential investment in the roadway system design to improve east-to-west travel through the region. Preliminary studies show that most commuters traveling east-to-west from Hollister use State Route 156. State Route 25 offers a more northern route.

Proposed improvements to State Route 25 would eventually shift traffic from State Route 156 to other routes. At this time, however, the San Benito Route 156 Improvement Project has been approved and funded by the Council of San Benito County Governments through its construction, and the safety concerns for this segment on State Route 156 cannot be ignored.

3. You appear to express a concern the elevated profile of the project would "dike" rainwater and presumably result in flooding.



In regard to flooding, the new roadway drainage would consist of drainage inlets and pipes that would drain the highway water into side ditches. A single ditch would combine the treated on-site runoff with off-site runoff. The ditch would be shallow (3 feet), and it would have berms (mounds) to slow down the flow rate and maximize infiltration. The single ditch is not designed to solve the regional floodplain issues but would have the capacity to convey low flows, such as a 10-year storm, which would benefit properties next to State Route 156. The drainage plans are included as an attachment to the 2010 Caltrans Hydrology and Floodplain Report in Appendix B.

Caltrans hopes that the responses provided adequately address your concerns expressed for the four areas discussed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report. Thank you again for your input.

Comment from Shirley Bernadotti, page 1 of 1

## San Benito 156 Improvement Project

### Public Hearing

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

### COMMENT CARD

NAME: Shirley Bernadotti

ADDRESS: 367 Rutherford Ave CITY: Redwood City ZIP: 94061-3514

REPRESENTING: Self-property owner 211 Cagney Rd., SSB

Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? ☒ YES ☐ NO

Please drop comments in the Comment Box or

Mail to: G. William "Trais" Norris III  
Senior Environmental Planner  
Department of Transportation  
2015 East Shields Ave. Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):

1. Exactly how much acreage will be taken from my property?  
I rent the land and <sup>rent</sup> is based on acreage.
2. Are there provisions for noise abatement?
3. I plan on leasing the house, so what information can you give me for full disclosure of disruption of egress and entry to property or any other impact? (i.e. 211 Cagney Road) during construction?
4. Compensation?

How Did You Hear About This Meeting?



☐ newspaper ☐ newsletter ☐ someone told me about it ☐ other: Keller

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**Response to Ms. Bernadotti**

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project. You submitted four questions regarding your property, which Caltrans hopes are answered adequately.

1. Exactly how much acreage will be taken from my property?

Caltrans' preliminary design estimates that 2.02 acres would be acquired from your property parcel for the project.

2. Are there provisions for noise abatement?

Caltrans' noise specialists have not recommended noise abatement for your residence. Noise abatement is not considered until the predicted noise level approaches or exceeds the Caltrans' Noise Abatement Criteria of 67 decibels. According to 2008 Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement, which summarized the noise analysis completed for the project, the predicted (future) noise level for the homes located at the intersection of Cagney Road and Breen Road was 66 decibels. Because your residence is located north of these receptors, farther away from the project, the predicted noise level at your location should be less than that.

3. What information can you give me for full disclosure of disruption of egress and entry to my property at 211 Cagney Road, or any other impact, during construction?

Disruption to Cagney Road is expected to be minimal during the construction of the new alignments as building activities would occur to the south of existing State Route 156. When the new alignments are constructed and the existing State Route 156 becomes a frontage road, the new intersection of Cagney Road and existing State Route 156 would be reconfigured, which would temporarily disrupt access. Your concern has been forwarded to the Caltrans design branch for consideration.

4. Compensation?

At the time of right-of-way acquisition, all activities would be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, as amended.

Your comments have been forwarded to the District 5 project manager and District 5 Right-of-Way Appraisal Branch for consideration. Thank you again for your input.

## Comment from Rachel Ponce, page 1 of 1

**San Benito 156 Improvement Project**

**Public Hearing**  
Wednesday, April 6, 2011

**COMMENT CARD**

NAME: Rachel Ponce

ADDRESS: P.O. Box 411 CITY: San Juan Bto. ZIP: CA, 95045

REPRESENTING: Self

Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? ☐ YES ☒ NO

Please drop comments in the Comment Box or



Mail to: G. William "Trais" Norris III  
Senior Environmental Planner  
Department of Transportation  
2015 East Shields Ave. Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726-5428

I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):

As a resident of San Juan Bautista I am  
not in favor of this project. At the  
time of the state of California being in a  
economic hardship taking 24 acres of  
prime farm land in our area would be a  
very hard economic hit to our families. We  
spend 50 million dollars on a road that  
is only 4 miles long. Our schools desperately  
need that 50 million dollars to prepare our  
children for the future.

Please respond by May 5, 2011

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? ☐ newspaper ☐ newsletter ☒ someone told me about it ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

1



### **Response to Ms. Ponce**

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contained only the information necessary to address the court's order. Comments submitted were to address only those four areas.

Your opposition to the project is noted. You also appear to express concerns the conversion of 124 acres of prime farmland would result in an economic hardship for your area and question why this project is being proposed, and appear to suggest the funds could be spent elsewhere.



1. Caltrans' policy is to avoid or minimize farmland impacts to the maximum extent possible. However, this segment of State Route 156 is surrounded by farmland, which makes the avoidance of farmland impacts impossible. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report discusses the measures Caltrans would adopt to help mitigate the loss of farmland.

Caltrans has made a good faith effort to be informed about the needs and wishes of the farming community by meeting with the farmers directly affected by the highway project. Caltrans would prefer minimizing any disruption to farming operations and does not expect any major disruptions during construction.

2. In regard to the proposal for the project and its funding, the San Benito 156 Improvement Project has been approved and funded by the Council of San Benito County Governments through its construction.

Caltrans hopes that the responses provided adequately address your concerns expressed for the four areas discussed in the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report. Thank you again for your input.

## Comment from Ron Rodrigues, page 1 of 1

<h2 style="text-align: center;">San Benito 156 Improvement Project</h2>	
<h3 style="text-align: center;">Public Hearing</h3>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday, April 6, 2011</p>	
<h3 style="text-align: center;">COMMENT CARD</h3>	
NAME: <u>RON RODRIGUES</u>	
ADDRESS: <u>2255 UNION RD.</u> CITY: <u>HOLLISTER</u> ZIP: <u>CA 95023</u>	
REPRESENTING: <u>SELF</u>	
Do you wish to be added to the project mailing list? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Please drop comments in the Comment Box or	
Mail to: G. William "Trais" Norris III Senior Environmental Planner Department of Transportation 2015 East Shields Ave. Suite 100 Fresno, CA 93726-5428	
I would like the following comments filed in the record (please print):	
<u>MY CONCERNS - EXTRA TRAFFIC USING</u> <u>UNION RD, DUE TO 156 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT</u> <u>- UNION RD HAS BECOME A TRUCK ROUTE</u> <u>AS WELL AS A "COMMUTE CORRIDOR". *</u> <u>*THE PROJECT WILL ALSO CREATE</u> <u>FLOOD PROBLEMS - THE CREEK CAN'T</u> <u>HANDLE THE WATER VOLUME DURING</u> <u>PERIODS OF HEAVY RAINFALL.</u> <u>* UNION RD. SHOULD BECOME A STATE</u> <u>ROUTE.</u>	
Please respond by May 5, 2011	
How Did You Hear About This Meeting? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> newsletter <input type="checkbox"/> someone told me about it <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____	
 	



### ***Response to Ron Rodrigues***

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contained only the information necessary to address the court's order. Comments submitted were to address only those four areas. You express a concern for truck traffic on Union Road, flooding in the San Juan Creek, and suggest Union Road become a state highway.

1. In regards to Union Road and truck traffic, San Benito County is currently discussing truck route designations. Please contact the county with your concern for truck traffic on Union Road and the suggestion regarding making Union Road a state highway.
2. In regard to the San Juan Creek flooding, one of Caltrans proposals to prevent flooding in a 100-year flow is to widen the segment of the San Juan Creek channel to 10 feet from Mission Vineyard to the San Juan Creek bridge. This proposed modification to the creek channel is anticipated to decrease the surface-water elevation downstream in a 100-year flow.

Caltrans hopes that the responses provided adequately address your concerns expressed. Thank you again for your input.

## Section 4.0 Public Hearing Transcripts

The following transcript is for the public hearing held in San Juan Bautista on Wednesday, March 6, 2011. Responses to comments are provided at the end of the transcript copy.

1 CALTRANS ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION - FRESNO  
2 PUBLIC HEARING  
3 - - -  
4  
5 IN RE: )  
6 )  
7 SAN BENITO 156 IMPROVEMENT )  
8 PROJECT )  
9 )  
10 )  
11  
12  
13 PUBLIC HEARING  
14 APRIL 6, 2011  
15 SAN JUAN BAUTISTA, CALIFORNIA  
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20  
21 ATKINSON-BAKER, INC.  
22 COURT REPORTERS  
23 www.depo.com  
(800) 288-3376  
24  
25 REPORTED BY: BARBARA H. GONZALEZ, CSR NO. 4646  
FILE NO. A5031C7



## Transcripts from the Public Hearing, page 2 of 8

1 CALTRANS ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION - FRESNO  
2 PUBLIC HEARING  
3 - - -  
4 IN RE: )  
5 )  
6 )  
7 SAN BENITO 156 IMPROVEMENT )  
8 PROJECT )  
9 )  
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16 Public Hearing held on behalf of CalTrans at San  
17 Juan Bautista Elementary School 100 Nyland Drive, San Juan  
18 Bautista, California commencing at 4:30 p.m., Wednesday April 6,  
19 2011, before Barbara H. Gonzalez, CSR No. 4646.  
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Transcripts from the Public Hearing, page 3 of 8

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PROCEEDINGS

MR. ROSALES: May I have your attention. It's 4:30. This public hearing is now opened. I do have a few comments just to address why we're here today.

The reason we're here today is to present our draft supplemental environmental impact report. This document provides added information on four topics deemed necessary by the Superior Court of California order.

And these four areas, we have provided supplemental information and these areas are updated. We updated the 2004 hydraulic study, we explain the standards used to determine our noise study. We provided information regarding the California tiger salamander, which was added to the final 2008 environmental impact report.

And we provided additional analysis and explanation on the feasible mitigation measures of farmland loss. All of the areas of the 2008 environmental impact report were not changed.

We do have experts here to provide information. Ask any questions on these four topics. We also have our court reporter Barbara here to take your comments if you would like or you can write them down and leave them here, or mail them in so us.

So we look forward to hearing from you, and thank you. My name is Richard Rosales. I'm the project manager.

COMMENTS:

MS. VONK: I'm Cara, C-a-r-a, V as in Victor, o-n-k, of



## Transcripts from the Public Hearing, page 4 of 8

1 San Juan Bautista, California.

2 The project purpose of route continuity, reduced  
3 congestion and increased safety can be easily accommodated  
4 through feasible and less drastic alternative means.

5 Transportation of east slash west interregional truck and  
6 commuter traffic can be devised through the highway 152  
7 improvement project without destroying one of the most scenic and  
8 historic places in California.

9 This is not a quote green, unquote project. Conceived in  
10 the 1950's and early 1960's during the era of quote,  
11 redevelopment unquote, which destroyed so many of our cultural  
12 heritage, CalTrans refuses to get off this wrong track. It has  
13 taken all these years to reach this point with funding finally  
14 available.

15 CalTrans is not willing to wait for a better project, e.g.  
16 the Highway 152 plan which will take additional years to develop  
17 and complete. In the meantime, CalTrans will destroy the San  
18 Juan valley. The 180 foot sound wall is new news to me.  
19 Concreted drainage ditches and longer bigger bridges, all new  
20 news.

21 Four lanes, a median and frontage road all wider than  
22 Highway 5 destroys the rural cultural experience. Highway 156  
23 was designated as eligible for quote, scenic designation, unquote  
24 under the original legislation.

25 This project will destroy this scenic highway and cultural

1

2

Transcripts from the Public Hearing, page 5 of 8

1 landscape. Transferred development rights might be a way to  
2 compensate farmers for acreage taken by this project. But let's  
3 face it, TDR's are a bit like quote, the Emperor has no clothes;  
4 unquote.

3

5 The landscape will be marred forever and quote, taken,  
6 unquote from the public's view and enjoyment. Focus on a 5.2  
7 mile stretch of highway which narrows back down to two lanes  
8 ignores the cumulative negative impacts of the entire project.

9 The noise analysis does not recognize the increased volume  
10 and speeds of truck traffic, Not to mention insufficient  
11 monitoring locations. I'm incorporating all of my written  
12 comments of October 14, 2007 here.

4

13 This is truly a highway to no where.

14 MR. DOBLER: My name is Steven Dobler, D-o-b-l-e-r. And  
15 we farm a thousand acres in the valley, along with some of it's  
16 along the project so they're taking 41 acres of ours and we have  
17 water wells on either side of the road.

18 So one of my main concerns is pipelines, the  
19 underground pipelines when the highway comes over. And I just  
20 want to get on the record some day those lines once they're paved  
21 are going to break. How do I fix them?

1

22 I don't want to have to get extensive permits,  
23 special equipment to get in there. So I'm hoping they're  
24 planning on culverts to allow for that. So I want to make sure  
25 they're aware of it. They said they are.



## Transcripts from the Public Hearing, page 6 of 8

2

1                   So I just want to get on record that again that's  
2 one concern. I think that was the biggest one. The other one,  
3 of course I mean they're taking 41 acres, it would be great if  
4 they didn't. I will say I think they'll laugh at me when they  
5 read the record, but the old school house that's along the deal,  
6 their highway is swinging it out to avoid the school house and  
7 one of our houses and then back in.

8                   And that's why we are losing that ground. So we  
9 would love to see that school house be moved either to the north  
10 or south. We'd be willing to donate the property to the south  
11 where we are, if they would keep the highway more to the north.  
12 I know they said they can't do it but I still want to mark it  
13 down.

14                   In a perfect world, it would go to the north and  
15 it would allow the highway to probably save half this ground of  
16 ours that they're taking which ironically they're going to try to  
17 mitigate somewhere else and buy conservation easement. So in  
18 moving this school would have half the impact.

19                   I know it's technically a historical monument or  
20 something like that. That was really it. I will follow up with  
21 written comments but I want to make sure we have addressed the  
22 fact we have multiple pipelines under the highway and this is  
23 going to be a huge footprint over them.

24                   And I just want to be satisfied that those are  
25 going to be addressed. Don't know what else to say. There is

6

Transcripts from the Public Hearing, page 7 of 8

1 some access issues but they sound like they're going to  
2 accommodate that. They are cutting off our access to the  
3 highway. But sounds like they realize that and are going to take  
4 care of that, so trust them to do such but I wanted to get on  
5 record.

3

6 I guess the only other one is I've asked the  
7 timeline on this and we're assured that this all will come later.  
8 So they're going to get the project and then they will talk about  
9 easements and purchase and we have a time to talk values and all  
10 that later is what I've been assured.

4

11 I don't want to miss any steps and I know they're  
12 going to go through the public process. I've been told don't  
13 worry about it, we know these things and your time will come. I  
14 don't want to get a letter in the mail and the bulldozer is  
15 coming and we haven't talked about it. That's it. And I'll be  
16 in contact with folks after that. Good enough.

17 MR. ROSALES: Can I have your attention please. The  
18 public hearing meeting for the San Benito 156 improvement project  
19 is now closed.

20 (Whereupon, the hearing was concluded at 7:30 p.m.)  
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25



## Transcripts from the Public Hearing, page 8 of 8

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE.

I, Barbara H. Gonzalez, CSR No. 4646, Certified Shorthand  
Reporter, certify;

That the foregoing proceedings were taken before me  
at the time and place therein set forth, at which time the  
witness was put under oath by me;

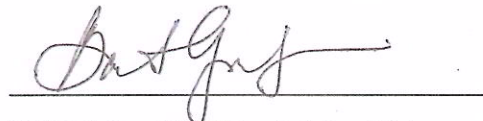
That the testimony of the witness, the questions  
propounded and all objections and statements made at the time of  
examination were recorded stenographically by me and were  
thereafter transcribed;

That the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of my  
shorthand notes so taken.

I further certify that I am not a relative or employee of  
any attorney of the parties nor financially interested in the  
action.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of  
California that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated this 13th day of April, 2011.



BARBARA H. GONZALEZ, C.S.R. 4646

### ***Response to Transcript Comments (Wednesday, April 6, 2011)***

The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contained only the information necessary to address the court's order. Comments submitted were to address only those four areas.

**Cara Vonk**

The concerns you express—consideration for the State Route 152 project, the destruction of a scenic highway and cultural landscape, and the size of the proposed expressway— unfortunately, are not part of the four areas discussed in the supplemental environmental document. However, in proposing the San Benito 156 Improvement Project, please keep in mind that Caltrans is not only attempting to preserve and protect the historic resources of the city of San Juan Bautista and the San Juan Valley, but is also trying to maintain the economic health of northern San Benito County while meeting the needs of the people traveling locally and regionally along the State Route 156 corridor.

You also question the proposed soundwall, the adequacy of the noise study completed for the project, and the proposed drainage system. You also suggest compensation for the farmers.

1. In regard to the noise abatement, the 2008 Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment with Finding of No Significant Impact proposed noise abatement for the Mission Vineyard RV Park in the form of a soundwall nine feet high and 870 feet long. Upon completion of the project design, the final decision on noise abatement would be made by the affected property owners and the project manager.
2. In regard to the concrete ditches and larger bridges, you are correct in stating this is new information. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report provides an updated analysis of hydrology and flooding impacts as directed by the court judgment and writ. Caltrans recommends, to mitigate the flooding due to flow concentrations, construction of either a concrete-lined ditch or a reinforced five-foot-diameter concrete pipe parallel to the north side of State Route 156 between Mission Vineyard Road and the San Juan Creek bridge. Also, the Caltrans Division of Structures recommends a larger bridge for the new eastbound lanes at San Juan Creek.
3. In regard to compensation to the farmers, any right-of-way acquisition would be purchased at fair market value. Caltrans would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, farm, or non-profit organization that would be



- displaced, or that has on-site investments, such as wells and irrigation systems, displaced as a result of acquisition of real property for public use. Relocation resources would be available to all displaced individuals, free of discrimination.
4. In regard to the inadequacy of the noise study completed for the project, Caltrans identified 27 noise receptors, which represented homes and businesses in the project area. At no location on the project do project-related noise levels increase by more than 5 decibels over existing noise levels. Many of the project's sensitive receptors were north of the existing highway. For most of these receptors, because the realigned highway would move traffic away from the receptors, 2030 noise levels would be lower if the project is built.

**Stephen Dobler**

You appear to express concerns for your farming operations in regard to irrigation; the San Justo Schoolhouse and its relationship to the farmland needed from your property parcel; access to the new expressway; and the project schedule.

First of all, Caltrans would like to express our gratitude to your farming operation for your cooperation and candidness over these past years. Caltrans has taken your comments and concerns under consideration and has incorporated some of these concerns into the project farmland mitigation.

1. In regard to your irrigation system, Caltrans has noted your concerns and will make the effort to install culverts to protect the irrigation lines from damage. During construction, efforts would be made to minimize disruption to irrigation. Caltrans has also incorporated into the farmland mitigation, the relocation of irrigation release valves to the south of the expressway so you and your employees do not have to cross the expressway to turn the water off and on.
2. In regard to the San Justo Schoolhouse, the former San Justo School was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places on June 9, 2003. The school was built in 1923, used from 1923 to 1968 (the period of significance), and is now a private residence. The school building is eligible at the local level of significance because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and because it represents the work of Ralph Wyckoff, a local master architect.

Moving the former school building was considered but for the following reasons was rejected: adverse effects under Section 106 of the 1966 National

Historic Preservation Act; potential to damage the building; and Section 4(f) of the 1966 Department of Transportation Act. The Department of Transportation Act (DOT Act) of 1966 included a special provision—Section 4(f)—that stipulates the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other Department of Transportation agencies cannot approve the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historical sites unless the following conditions apply:

- There is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land.
  - The action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from use.
3. In regard to access to the new expressway, Caltrans has noted your concerns and has discussed moving your access to a proposed access easement that would intersect the new alignment at Bixby Road.
  4. In regard to the project schedule, the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report must be approved and certified. Once the environmental document is certified, Caltrans would move forward with the final design. During the final design phase, Caltrans right-of-way agents would initiate contact with all property owners affected by the project to provide relocation advisory assistance for displacements or on-site investments such as wells and irrigation systems. The right-of-way agents would also conduct appraisals of any properties needed for the project. Caltrans estimates the construction of the project to begin in the fiscal year 2014/2015.



## Section 6.0 Late Comments

### Comments received from Celia Kilsby



Celia Kilsby  
<c.kilsby@comcast.net>  
05/11/2011 04:21 PM

To <richard\_rosales@dot.ca.gov>, Trais Norris  
<trais\_norris@dot.ca.gov>

cc

Subject 156 Project

John Freeman's article in the San Juan Star in May 2011 is an excellent overview of why the 156 project is a bad plan. If you haven't read the article we can summarize here -

1. Six lanes, including a frontage road is excessive, especially when the freeways connected by 156 are the 101 and the I-5, each with 4 lanes with no frontage road.
2. The 156 is still only two lanes for the next 12 miles. Bottleneck anyone?
3. Your plan is too big for the area - (not to mention too costly). A smaller plan without a frontage road would make more sense.
4. The cross streets, Lucy Brown, Breen, Flint and others could be blocked off to make a much safer highway.
5. As a business owner and taxpayer, we believe the most sensible, cost effective design would be to make the 152 four lanes to Gilroy. This would serve the same purpose.

Please reconsider - the current design has too many flaws and should be reduced in size or scrapped completely. We are not sure exactly why you are continuing on this trek when the negatives are so apparent. Just because there has been a lot of work done doesn't mean it is a good plan to move forward on - it is time to change your plan now!

Celia and Richard Kilsby  
Mission Vineyard LLC

### **Response to Celia and Richard Kilsby**

Thank you for your interest in the San Benito 156 Improvement Project. Caltrans appreciated all the comments received on the project. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report contained only the information necessary to address the court's order. Comments submitted were to address only those four areas.

Thank you for summarizing the John Freeman article. Unfortunately, none of the comments address the four areas discussed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report, but Caltrans appreciates the information. Thank you again for your input.



